木尾士目 Kio Shumoku

Soma Yoshino

アフタヌーンKC

# 四年生

The 4th Grade

アフタヌーン
KC179

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木尾士目

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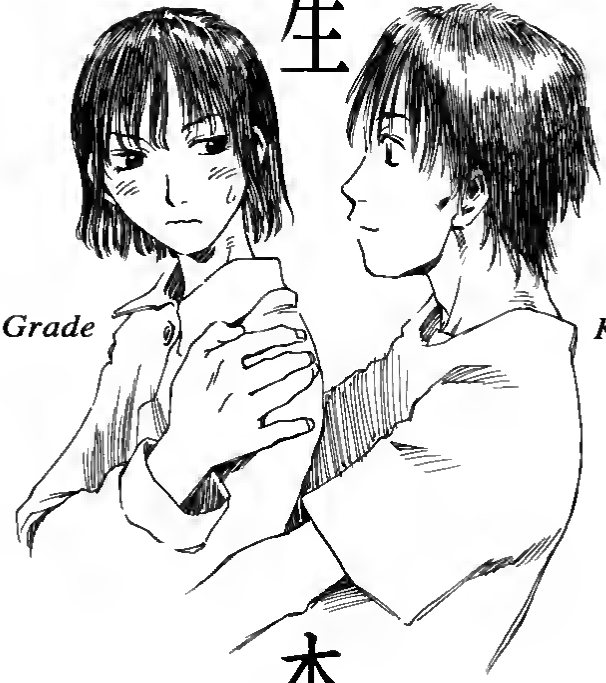
# 四年生



*The 4th Grade*

*Kio Shimoku*

木尾士目

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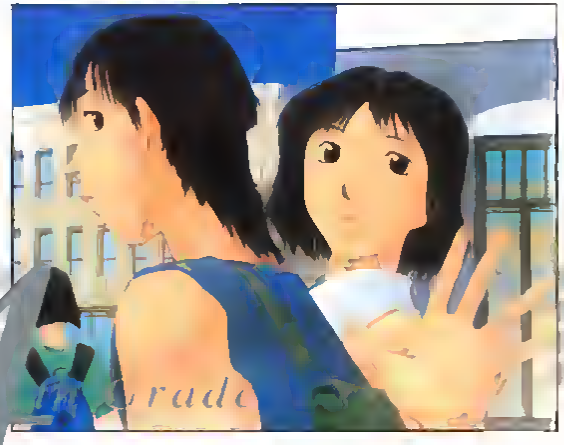
Shima Akio and Soma Yoshino are lovers,
facing the reality of their fourth year in university.
No matter how much they try and think things over,
they can't quite figure out what to do about their parents,
their friends, or even their own relationship.
This is the story of their youth.
Youth fraught with pain and regret.



The 4th Grade

*The Silent Treatment*

*The 4th Grade*
*Kio Shimoku*

四年生木尾士目

［目 次］


*Chapter 1: Baby* 3

*Chapter 2: Pale Blue* 43

*Chapter 3: Drinking Parties and Tea Parties* 75

*Chapter 4: Job Hunting* 109

*Chapter 5: Parents* 141

*Final Chapter: Ocean Breeze* 175

*Super Embarrassed Theater* 203

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## The 4th Grade
## 木尾士目
## Kio Shimoku

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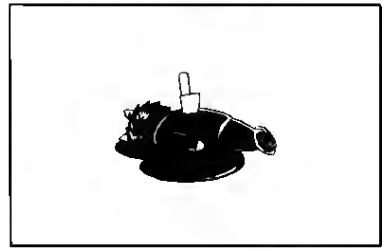
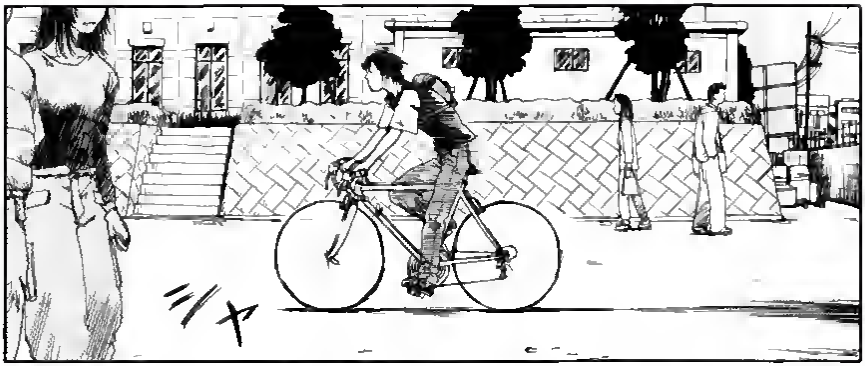
Man Once You Start Doing This Kind of Extra Stuff You Just Can't Stop

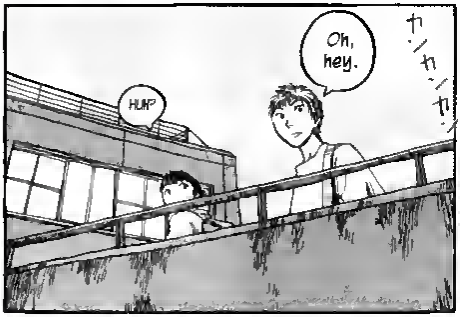
SHPM FOR SHORT!
A hidden story, secreted away behind the dust jacket, visible only to those in the know! And this time, the story in question is...
Yes, I did it again! Another secret four panel manga!

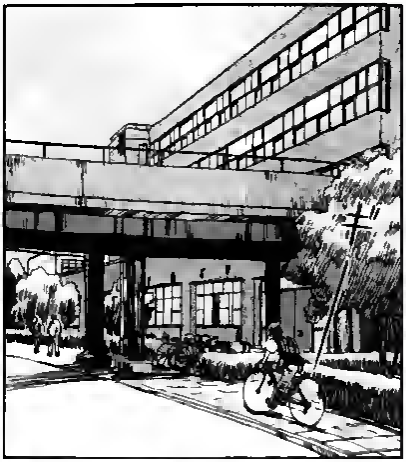
the title

RARE INDEED!
So I'M taking this opportunity to examine her personality and living conditions in order to determi
In a rare departure from character, I didn't have a scene with Yoshino in her bra and panties even once! I didn't even do a design sketch!






Oh, hey.
HUH?



# Chapter 1: Baby

You're still playing that game? Yeesh.
Nah, Mario Kart time trials.
I'm so good now, man, you don't even know.
Lemme guess. Another part-time job?
You're the only one who hasn't gotten theirs checked yet.
Then what the hell're you talking with us for? Get going already!
Anyway, the professor gave me a call, so here I am.
He said it's about my graduation thesis.
コンコン
Yoshino? That you?
(GIRL'S VOICE)
Come in!

Oh?

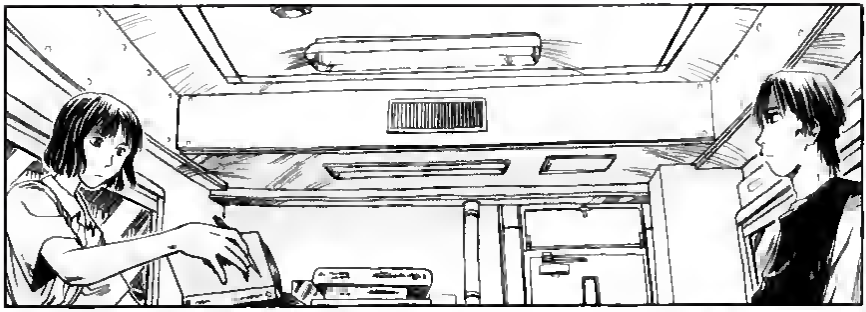
So, where's the professor?
Yusuke and Naoko said that too, the moment they saw me
Heheha
He just stepped out for a bit. He'll be right back.

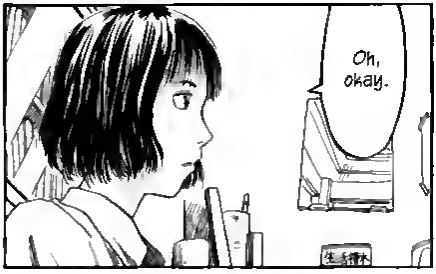
You know you're the third person to say that to me today?
What brings you here, Akio?

Sure...
Want some tea?

Hmm

So what's all this stuff?
Mmm... Old bar exam questions.
To be a little bit more specific, it's a question about civil law from the essay stage of the exam
I'll spare you the details You wouldn't understand them anyway
client B a debt
See? Told you
Meh I'm allergic to this stuff
You're a law student, too You shouldn't be totally lost.
That's not a good thing, you know.
Can't help it Not all students're born equal, yeah?
You don't have to get mad at me about it
...Huh?
What?
Nothing.




Oh, okay.

Oh, yeah. I'm gonna go home this weekend and have some drinks with my high school friends.

ガチャ

Thought up a decent thesis statement yet?
AFTERNOON PROFESSOR
すたすたすた

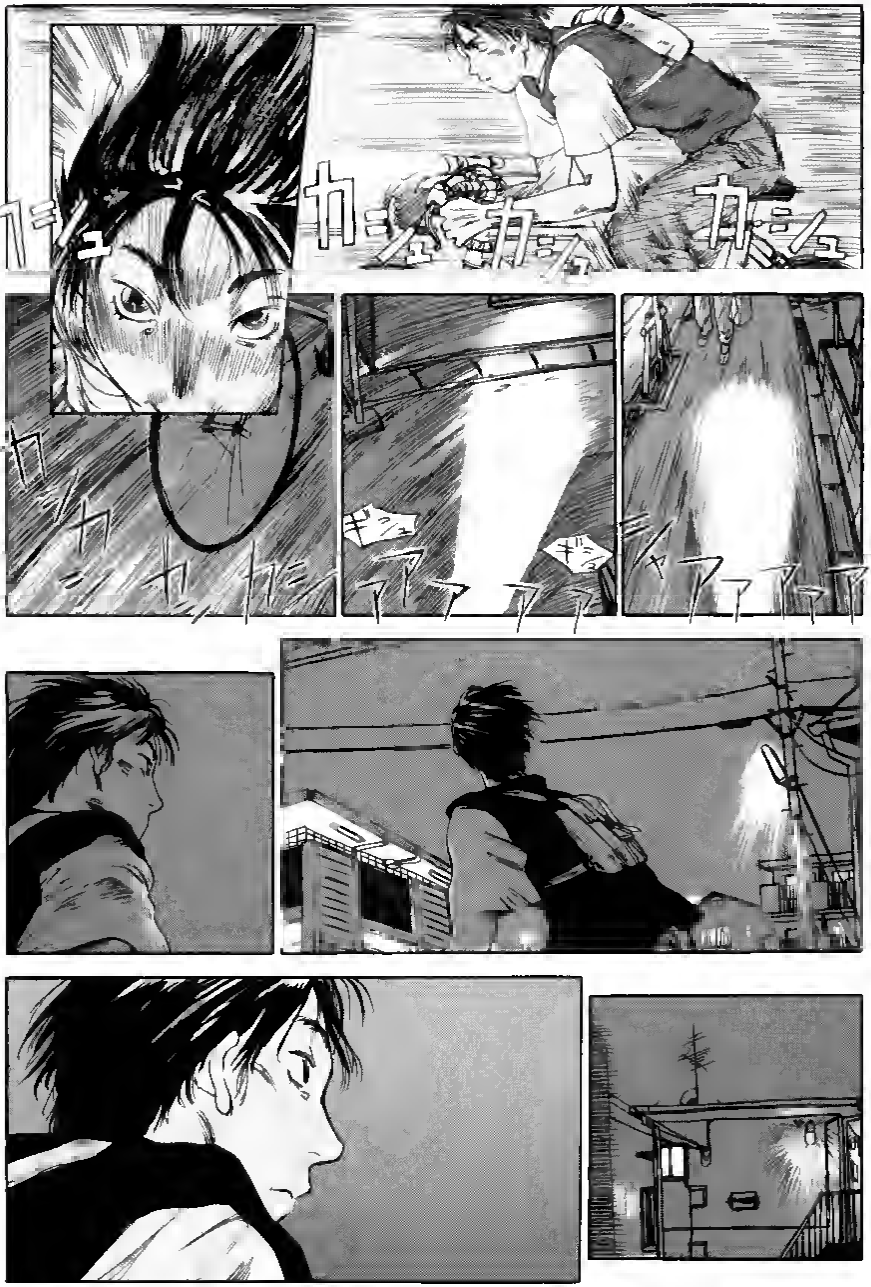
Aha! So you've finally come, Shima.

Can't you come up with something a little bit more definite?
My department is civil procedure, remember.
Isn't this more of a general outline than grad thesis material?
Well... I don't know. Feels sort of vague to me.
Hmm? Introduction to Law?
Let's hear it.
Well, I've got something about penal law, if that's alright.
AN IDEA AT LEAST
Pick a topic that actually has to do with law.
You're not a liberal arts major.
I thought maybe I'd take a look at the records and results of past felony cases,
It's about defending felons, actually.
and use that as a base to talk about the moral conflicts and issues that the lawyers had to deal with...
Well, who'm I to argue with someone who's gonna be a lawyer soon, yeah?
Pretty much what she said.
IT MIGHT BE AN INTERESTING TOPIC FOR HOBBY RESEARCH BUT...
Yeah...

You two been fighting?
That's sort of a problem, too
That's not it at all, professor.
We're doing fine. Really.
Well. Not that I didn't see this coming. One of you is talented enough to think about being a lawyer, and the other's struggling just to graduate
Weren't we talking about graduation theses?!
.....
That goes for you too, Soma! If you think he's a pain, then just dump him!
Right!
What
What
..What?
HUH?
Yeah, yeah
IF YOU THINK YOU'VE DRAGGING HER DOWN, LEAVE HER FOR HER SAKE!
Shima! Don't you dare get in Soma's way!
I'll keep that in mind

Just write it up and I'll let you graduate, okay?
To be honest I didn't expect anything groundbreaking from you anyway.
I think you should just go with the one you brought me.
Gotcha
Well, anyway Joking aside,
YOU'RE SO MEAN.
Just spruce it up a little, bring it to me, and I'll give it my seal of approval.
Then you can hand it in at the department office.
Well, I guess I'll be going, then
Mhmm.
Don't forget your copy.
It's already April, so try not to make too many changes
Uh huh
Oh Uhh
Right
Okay.
I'll be there once I'm done working.
I'm gonna be staying at your place tonight, so could you get some dinner ready for me?
Yoshino.
Huh?
ACK

Don't be so hard on Shima
バラララ
バタン
DON'T SAY THAT IN PUBLIC!
You idiot!
Hey!
He used to be a good student, back when he was a freshman
SEE YA
BYE.
キィ
ナッ
ナッ
ニャ


カシュ
カシュ
カシュ
カシュ
カシュ
カシュ
アアアア
アアアアア

Grilled mackerel
What's for dinner?
I was just about to get started
Got a problem with that?
ガチャ
Oh, you're early
Yeah
I just haven't had the time to tidy up
Is it just me or are there even more books here than last time?
I'm going to make some miso and spinach too
Go and sit down
FINE FINE

Hmm...
Could you just clear off the top of the table for me?
Yeah, sure
It isn't like I can bluff my way through things with a lot of buzzwords and some quick thinking like you, Akio.
That won't cut it with the bar exam, or with what comes after.
I know that I try not to hit the books too hard.
But there's just a limit to how far you can go without knowledge.
What?
You spend all your time reading this stuff, but is it really helping? Feels kinda like you're just being a law freak.
Hmm?
I'm not mad at all.
...Are you still mad about this afternoon?
Careful, Akio.
If someone heard you say that, your bad boy image would be in shambles.
Honestly...
I kinda feel neglected these days...

You know what Naoko told me a while ago?
That reminds me.
What'd she say?
Hmm?

What?
Betcha everyone else's like that when they're alone together, too.
Mhmm

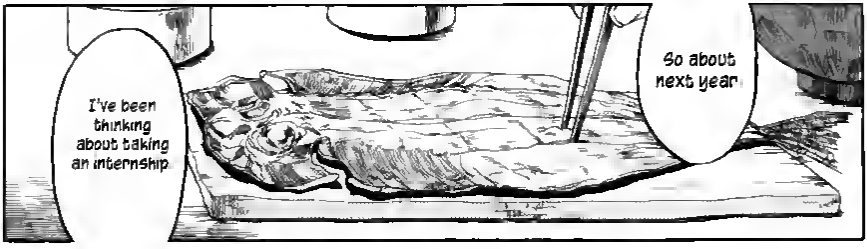
Mmm

We just talk about normal things just like everyone else, right?
Right

She said she couldn't even imagine what we talk about when it's just the two of us

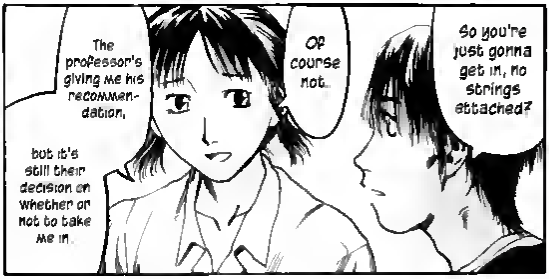
Hmm? Were you expecting something?
Women are so good at doing that...

Whoops! Fish's gonna burn!

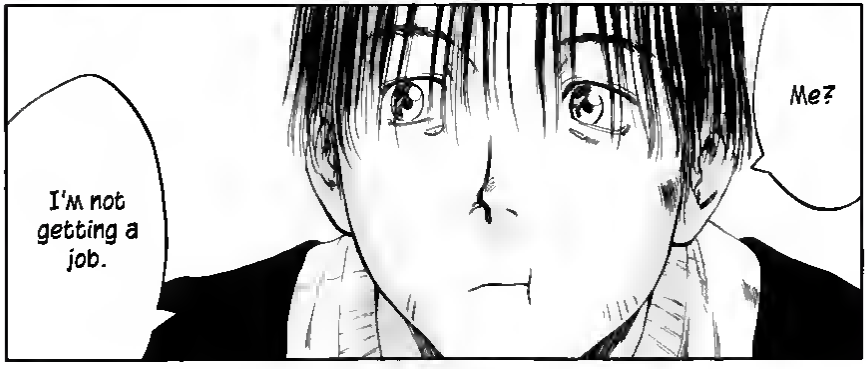

I've been thinking about taking an internship.
So about next year.

THEY'LL JUST HAVE ME PUSHING PAPERS, BUT STILL
I JUST FEEL LIKE I'LL GET A LOT MORE BY BEING OUT IN THE FIELD
I'LL STUDY ON THE SIDE AND THEN TAKE THE BAR EXAM LATER.
SO YOU'RE NOT GONNA GO TO GRAD SCHOOL?
OH, YEAH, YOU TOLD ME ABOUT THAT ONE.
REMEMBER THAT LAW FIRM THE PROFESSOR SAID HE'D GET ME INTO?

SHOULDN'T YOU START LOOKING FOR A JOB, TOO, AKIO?


THE PROFESSOR'S GIVING ME HIS RECOMMENDATION,
BUT IT'S STILL THEIR DECISION ON WHETHER OR NOT TO TAKE ME IN.
OF COURSE NOT.
SO YOU'RE JUST GONNA GET IN, NO STRINGS ATTACHED?

WELL, I THINK IT'S MORE UP TO ME THAN HOW I GO ABOUT IT.
OKAY, I GUESS.
DON'CHA THINK IT'D BE FASTER TO JUST TAKE GRADUATE PREP COURSES?
MMM.
YOU SURE YOU'LL HAVE TIME TO STUDY AND WORK AT THE SAME TIME?


I'M NOT GETTING A JOB.
ME?

Huh?
Huh?
I mean, I don't really have anything I wanna do for a living...
And besides, you can get by here in Tokyo with part-time jobs just fine, yeah?
Why?!
Well, if you have to know...
Really?
Really.
I can just do as much work with part-times as I would with a real job.
It'll be fine, trust me.
I bet you won't even be able to pay your rent.
What? No you can't. Do you have any idea how high prices are in Tokyo?
I'll manage

Well technically, aren't lawyers self-employed, too?
Wait, how would you write that in your tax return, anyway?
You'll have to cough up all the money for taxes and medical insurance yourself, too.
What if you can't find a job and your income takes a hit and you can't even provide for your family?
SELF-EMPLOYED? NO, IT'S STILL WAGE INCOME, SO THERE'D BE A LIMIT...
Whoa, you're looking at this really seriously
But no matter how much you earn, you're still depending on inconsistent income!
You won't have any job security at all
It's no better than being totally unemployed!
I'm heading down home this weekend, but I'm not telling 'em a thing.
Heheh
Huh? Nope.
Have you talked to your parents about this?
I'm an only son so I can already see 'em talking my ear off if I ever told them I wasn't getting a job
My dad's director at a trading company, and my mom's a housewife
Don't even go there.
I'm joking
.....
Wait... You're really mad about this, aren't you?

I'm not marrying you.
Whatever. We've still got a while 'till we tie the knot, right?
Heh, well, I just want to live the carefree life, you know?
...Well, not really. It's your life, Akio. You can do what you want with it.
How could I marry a man who has no financial sense whatsoever?!
Err... well, y'know...
Isn't it obvious?
...Huh?
ズズ
I mean, can't you just become a lawyer and earn enough for the both of us?
If that's what you're expecting, then let's break up. I'm serious.

Besides, I'm not even thinking of marriage yet, anyway
Don't you feel the same?
You'll just end up dragging my life down with you
I don't want to marry an incompetent man
Uhh, well, yeah, I guess...
.....

Sorry. Did I tick you off?
Are you trying to seduce me?
From the look of that smile, I'm not just trying.

キリ
Shush, woman
Eek!
Not that I'd break up with you so easily, but still
But just so you know, I'm serious about what I said back then, too
Well, I'm not one to dis-appoint
Heheh
さわ さわ
なで なで
ぐり ぐり
Mmm...
Huh?
You can tell?
Well, it was just a hunch
Is it just me, or are you faking it?

No, you don't have to if you don't want to.
Wanna just go to sleep tonight?
Just happens sometimes, doesn't it?
WE JUST ATE AND ALL YKNOW
For some reason I'm just not feeling it tonight, I guess
I wonder why
Hey, it's no fun for me either if I know it's all just an act. We don't have to do it tonight, okay?
You can do what you want, Akio...
ギュ
Ack!
I'm telling you, it's Pina
...But who knows? I might get in the mood if you start.
Lately it just feels like you're taking control of our relationship
Hmm?
I wonder when things got like this.

...You're right.
...Maybe you shouldn't think too much about it?
Phew
Mmph

Hrmmph... I'm gonna skip school today...
You've got practice today, remember? You can't just skip that!
Get up, Akio!
Breakfast time!
Don't care.
くか
もじ
もじもじ
もじ
もじ
RAZU UNIVERSITY

Yo.
Good morning, Akio
Heya Practice over?
てれん…
てれん…
You sure you can graduate like this, man? I'm not sure you'll have enough credits
What did you expect? It's been over
HAH HAH
Welp Guess that's that
That's funny coming from you, Yusuke
Aren't you in danger of not making the cut, yourself?
Wait for me, Naoko! As soon as I get a decent job I'll come and sweep you off your feet!
Of course, of course I'll be waiting.
With hair like that?
I dye it black and take out my earrings and bam respectable member of society.
Hey, it's fine.
Pfft Please I'm gonna graduate and then get a job, just you watch.
I'm going for a white collar job
Huh?

Mhmm.
THEY DON'T LOOK LIKE THEY'D FIT TOGETHER Y'KNOW?
Those two're really close, aren't they
LATER
...It really does feel like you've been ignoring me lately.
Sorry.
Don't talk about something like that in public, dummy.
Okay
Anyway, I'm gonna be staying in Sakura for the night, so don't wait up
You did?
Yeah I told you this yesterday, y'know
Hmm? You're heading home?
Oh, yeah I'm going drinking with my high school friends tomorrow

Alright, then
Have fun.
Ah. I've got a thesis seminar to catch. See you later.
Huh? Oh, yeah...

When are you going to come home, dear?
Uhh, dunno.
Alright. I'll leave the door unlocked so you can let yourself in.
Okay, Mom
Akio.

※1 Employment Agreement, a pact between Japanese universities and companies designed to give new graduates a fair chance at employment. Scrapped in 1997, a year before the current setting.

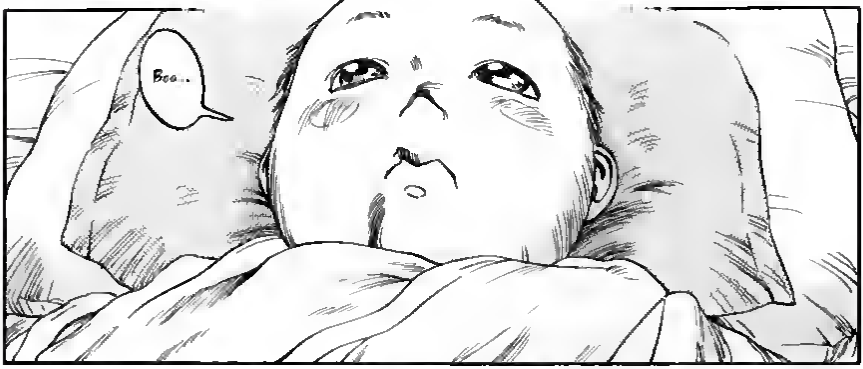
Then let's hear what you're thinking
IT'S A LITTLE SMALL TO CALL A REUNION, ACTUALLY
Yeah
I know, Dad. I'm thinking about it.
Yeah?
Going to your high school reunion is all well and good, but have you been thinking about a job?
You can't depend on the agreement※ any more, you know
I DON'T EVEN FEEL GUILTY ANYMORE. I JUST WANNA RUN.
SOMEONE, SAVE ME FROM MY PARENTS
Don't nag him so much, dear. Akio can take care of himself. Isn't that right, honey?
What I meant to say is, I'm still collecting data, yeah?
Err. Well, I mean, nothing's really set in stone yet, so...
Hmm?
How'd I ever turn out like this with parents like that?
...
...Maybe it's because they're like that?

Trust me, I know, but I just don't wanna be a salaryman
Yeah, yeah
Ain't like you can afford to be picky, man
Sounds like something any parent'd say
So making a living off part-time jobs when you've graduated from college is kinda bad, you know?
I mean, all I've got is a high school diploma and I still got a job
The place I'm working at, we're running a betting pool on when the whole thing'll go belly up
I COULD ALREADY TELL THEY HAD PROBLEMS WHEN THEY HIRED YOU
For the big conglomerates maybe
can't you kinda tell what your bank account'll be like 30 years down the road, right at that moment?
Well, I mean, if you get a job,
'Course not
Can't I just stay a part-timer my whole life?
Nope
AHHA
Dumb-ass
Hmm...
But work is work, I guess
But honestly, that's just what we've got to deal with. We're members of society now
Yeah. I work at an airport, checking luggage and stuff,
and from time to time I just feel like, "This isn't what I should be doing."
And man, I gotta tell you, work's no fun

MAN, TIME REALLY FLIES, EH?
WHAT ARE YOU, AN OLD MAN?
FINISHED IT ALL ALREADY
THE LIVER!
WANT ME TO GET IT?
HUH? WHERE'S THE MENU?
Forget about that, will you?
Bwa haha ha
Oh, yeah... You took an extra year before you got into uni, didn't you
Huh?
Man, I'll have to worry about all that next year, too, huh... I'm already getting a migraine
I wonder if there's anyone from our class who's gotten married yet...
She never really stood out that much, did she?
Didn't see that one coming
Yoko got hitched huh?
I GUESS THAT'S JUST HOW THINGS GO
HE'S SOOO TINY!
Mhmm! He's so cute you wouldn't believe it!
I even got to go and touch him the other day!
Huh? Really?
Huh? Seriously?
Yeah, there is
Remember Yoko?
Hattori Yoko?
Not anymore. She's married so it's Nomura.
She's already had a baby, actually
All right, we get it.
I'M THE YOUNGEST CHILD SO I NEVER KNEW
His hands and feet and ears and everything are just so small and round!
Seeing him really changes the way you look at life!
He is just Sooooooo cute!
Oooh...

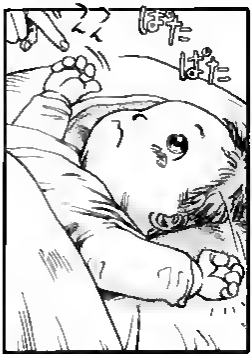
Hey, how about we all go and see the baby together?
Sometime tomorrow, maybe
What do you say?!
Mm... I think I'll pass
I HAVE STUFF TO DO
Sounds good. I'll bring the car, then
Well, I guess tomorrow is a Sunday...
I'M TELLING YOU, YOU'VE JUST GOT TO SEE HIM!
REALLY?
WHAT TIME WOULD BE BEST?
SOMETIME IN THE MORNING, I THINK.
ISN'T THAT TOO EARLY?
MORNING IS THE PERFECT TIME FOR BABIES!
A baby, huh...
ズズ
タン カシャカシャ タン

You could at least call...
Damn it...
Hello?
RRRR
RRRR
RRR
ピッ
Oh, Naoko?
.....
Hmm? No, not really. Why?
I'm not mad at you at all. I probably just sound weird because I haven't talked with anyone today...


Boo...

He's so tiny!
Seez Seez
TOLD YOU HE WAS CUTE!
He really came out of your stomach, Yoko?

SQUEEZE



NO WAY
Remember me, Ryoba?
I don't think he can quite yet.
Can he see us?
What did you say his name was again?
His name is Ryoba.
I'm almost afraid I'll break him.
Look at how tiny his hands are!
AND SO SOFT, TOO!
Sure.
Can we hold him?
Hahaha!
HE'S SAYING SOMETHING
Goo.
Aboo.
Upsy daisy!
His head! You have to hold up his head!

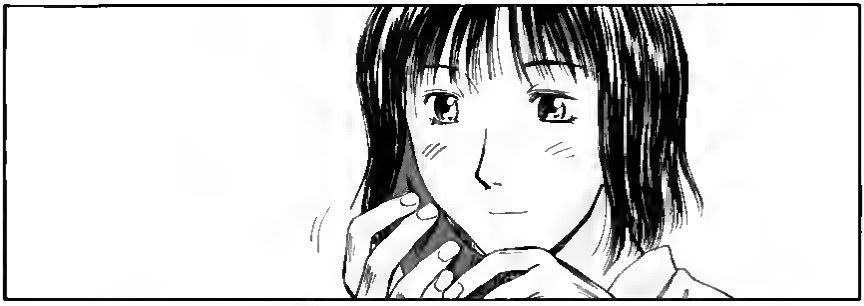
Hm. NO TEARS
There, there
AAAH
Don't panic. Babies always cry. It's just the way they are.
What do I do, Yoko?
Just stand up and rock him gently.
B-but
Boo...
Ack! He's crying, he's crying!
WAAAH
Oh, no
AAA
GOO..
Ah! He stopped crying.
Dream on, perv. She probably feeds him formula.
Wait, you don't mean breast-
WAAA
Just hold him for a moment, would you? I'll be right back.
but I give him formula in the morning
I do breast feed him too, actually.
Ah, it's just time for his morning meal.
NGAA
AAHH
Oh no, it's not working!
He's so calm when he's drinking!
Wow! He's really drinking it!
MMM
MM
I was just joking.
See? Idiot
WAAAA
There, there

I'M ON REALLY GOOD TERMS WITH MY MOTHER-IN-LAW NOW TOO
COME TO THINK OF IT WHERE'S THE HUBBY TODAY?
HE'S PROBABLY ALL THE WAY TO NAGOYA BY NOW
HE'S A TRUCK DRIVER, YOU KNOW
WOW THAT'S COOL

カチャ
AGH ARE ALL THESE EMPLOYMENT PAMPHLETS?
ガチャ
カチ
ズズ

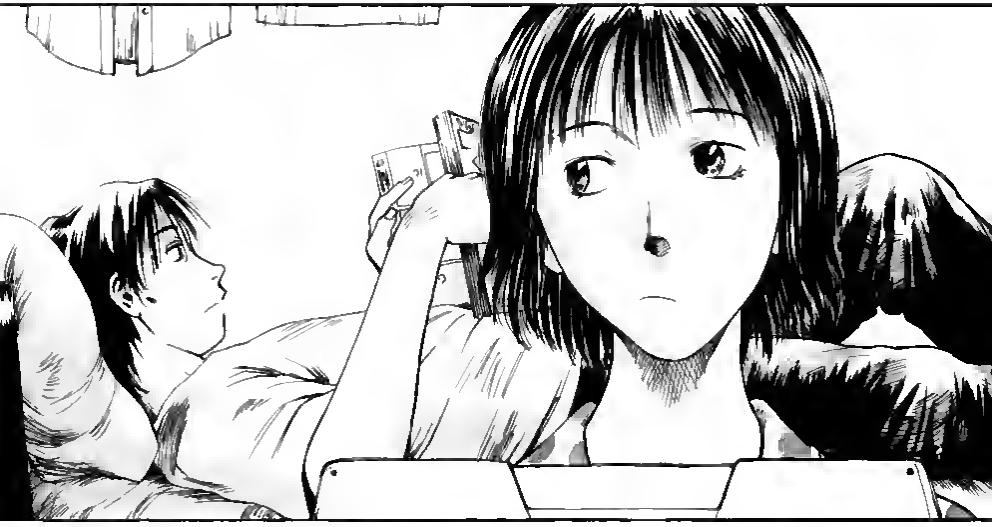
カシャカシャカ
タン
タタ
カシャ
カシャ
Just got back home.
Yeah.
Oh!
Akio?
!
RRRRR
Hello?

I thought you'd end up being late.
Mhmm.

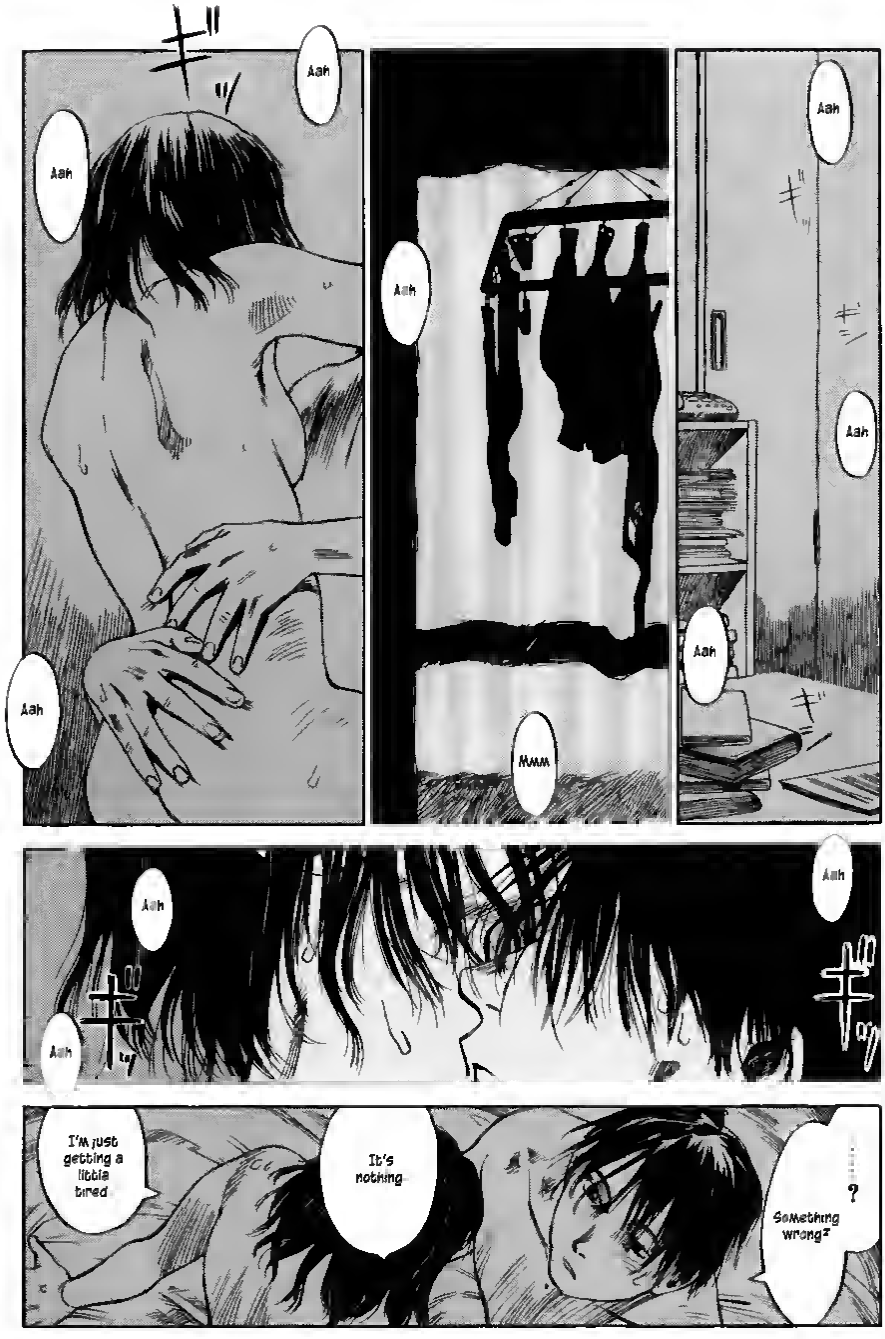


Haha
Really?
Well, it's not that weird, you know.
One of my friends already had one, too.
Huh?
Mhmm
Is that what it was like?
No, no, I'M not saying you're wrong
HEHEH
Yup
So how was it?
Uh huh
Uh huh
Really?

Uh huh.
Yeah, so I went to see her kid and...
It was like a little animal or something.
Yeah.
Haha
Man, imagine that little thing growing up to become a bonehead like me. If I was his dad, I'd be so angry...
You remember my little sister, right?
SHE'S ALREADY IN HIGH SCHOOL BY NOW THOUGH
Really? I wish I could go and see him too.
Mhmm.
Mhmm. She's six years younger than me.
Oh? How old is he?
Ah, all babies can do at that age is cry, really.
And then they'll start learning how to laugh.
They're so cute when they do that.
Though of course that means they get louder when they cry, too.
I think babies are like little bundles of energy.



# *Chapter 2*
# *Pale Blue*


Aah
Aah
Aah
Aah
Mmm
Aah
Aah
Aah
Aah
Aah
I'm just getting a little tired
It's nothing
.....?
Something wrong?

Hmm?
I'm fine with anything but...
Hmmm...
Wanna switch up positions?
OOF
AH
Hah wait, where're my legs supposed to be again?
I don't know
Really?
Don't you think this'll end up being pretty tiring too?
Gotcha
From behind?
HA
HA
HA
HA
HA
HA
HA
HA
HA
HA
HA
HA
Mmm
Are you holding on alright, Akio?

OHH
just keep going...
MMM
AH
so if you could
as long as you can...
Okay
MH
I'm really feeling it today,
AAH
Yeah, for now,
I guess
HAA
Come under the blanket with me?
Sure...

You know,
lately, it feels like I'm horny all the time for some reason
Isn't that a good thing?
I mean, it just means we're a good couple, yeah?
Mmm Yes, you're right, but
And in the end it's not like you came again, anyway
And you come too fast, Akio
Yeah... I just don't know
Sorry 'bout that
You look like something's bugging you
Mmm
When I have my wits about me,
I just start to think that we shouldn't be doing this
Why?
Well, it's... you know Pre-marital sex, and all
You pick now to start worrying about that?

That's what I'm afraid of.
That gap between myself and myself.
Well, you do have a point.
Back when we were holding back, that kinda felt good in its own way, too.
It felt kinda like we were fighting back temptation and winning.
Right?
But once we start, I just fall headlong into it,
and I end up losing myself in it,
and even when we're done I just feel happy, not guilty
You're still you.
Hold me?
...You're right.

So, putting this aside for the moment
Iruma, Arige, and Hmm. Yatabe?
So, who's not here today?
It's still May,
but it looks like people are already starting to look for jobs in earnest.
Can't really say the same for Yosuke.
Anyone know how they're doing?
Hmm. Come to think of it, I haven't seen Iruma for a while now
Naoko's doing fine, I think

He told her the other day, "Wait for me, I'll come for you!"
Did you know what I heard him say to her?
I suppose he's trying so hard for Ariga's sake
Iruma? Well, you know
We haven't seen him around, either I think he's not coming to school at all
I wonder why he's trying so hard to get a job
Yeah, it would be faster
Mhmm
I almost think he'd be better off just dropping now or something
HAHA
Isn't he pretty much taking the whole semester off at this point?
NOT THAT I WAS JEALOUS OF HER THOUGH!
I thought it was pretty romantic
I think that if you're really looking to get a job that's pretty much what it takes
I don't really agree
THAT DOESN'T SOUND VERY PROMI-SING
WELL, FIRST OFF I GUESS I'LL HEAD BACK HOME AND LOOK AROUND FOR SOMETHING THERE...
WHAT'RE YOU GONNA DO?
AH... I GUESS I SHOULD START GETTING READY TOO...
.....
...Well, I guess you're right about that, but

It kinda felt like you were going in on them back then
IT HAP-PENS SOME-TIMES
Not that it matters at this point
They probably feel the same
THEY DIDN'T MEAN IT Y'KNOW
You don't get along with 'em, eh
Oh. No, it's not like that
I just didn't like how it was like they were dismissing Naoko and Yusuke as irresponsible
HMM?
So, anyway
I've got class right now
Whatever. Let's talk it over tonight
Still?
This is perfectly normal if you're serious about your studies!
I knew you wouldn't give up on that
You "knew"?
You're really not going to get a job?
That's what I said, yeah?

Kare
Thanks.
コポポポ
は
ふ
ズズズ
ズズ
So, back to what I was saying earlier
I think your problem is that you don't really have any set goal in mind
Huh? What's this all about?
Don't you remember lunch today? I said we'd talk it over after dinner!
Hunting for a job's just a drag
I look at what Yusuke's doing and wonder to myself, "Damn, is it really worth doing all that?"
Hey!
ぐで
Whaat? C'mon, gimme a break. I'm too full to talk about stuff like that.
YOUR STEW WAS GREAT

If you told me to just start taking exams and going to interviews right now, I wouldn't be able to take it
Life in uni's gotten me too lazy now
What?
Besides, I don't think I'd be able to get a job even if I wanted to
Well, I can't say you're totally wrong
You're afraid that people will realize that you don't have any skills
You know what I think? I don't think you're lazy. I think you're afraid
So you're blaming college now?
Mmm
but don't you think it's a little self-centered to not get employed just because you don't feel like it?
I could understand if you weren't getting a job because you had something else you wanted to do.
If there's nothing you really want to do for a living, isn't getting a normal job the least you can do?
But still

What, then you saying you like dreamers, or something?
That's not even funny, you know
Way I see it, making do with part-time jobs is the way to go
Realistic, ain't it.
Shut up.
It just feels like you're putting on a cool front
When I went home last time, you know what he said to me?
"Since you're majoring in law, I bet you'll meet a lot of guys with bright futures ahead of them."
You know, my dad still doesn't know about you, Akio.
JUST MY MOM AND MY SIS
Eh?
Never mind, forget I said anything.
Actually, no, don't

Can you really meet my parents like that?
Without even a steady job?
What, so if I don't have a job I'm not even a human being anymore?
Of course not, but I mean, realistically speaking
...Well, I guess you have a point.
You can talk around it all you want, but in the end, it all comes down to employment
Right?
...Nah.
I can go meet them.
How much you make isn't everything.
But it is something. You can't just ignore it
It'd make my parents feel better, and help me believe in you.

What?
What did you mean by that just now?
Just felt like being an ass.
Huh?
Oh
Ah
Mmm?
Hmm?

Yes.
ERR...
Mind if I have a smoke?
ごく

Realistically speaking, maybe you might be able to make a living off part-time jobs
But...
Wait
I don't think you'd be able to support a family off of it
On the other hand,
Just think about it. Realistically speaking...
I mean
What?
Look
I know I ain't perfect...
What? What's wrong with that?
The hell's with all the "realistically" bullshit, huh?
You use it all the time too, Akio...

.....
Just what?
That's not it at all! It's just...
But don't you think it's pretty goddamn narrow-minded of you to think "Let's call it all off" because of that?
Nothing
しゃ
God dammit

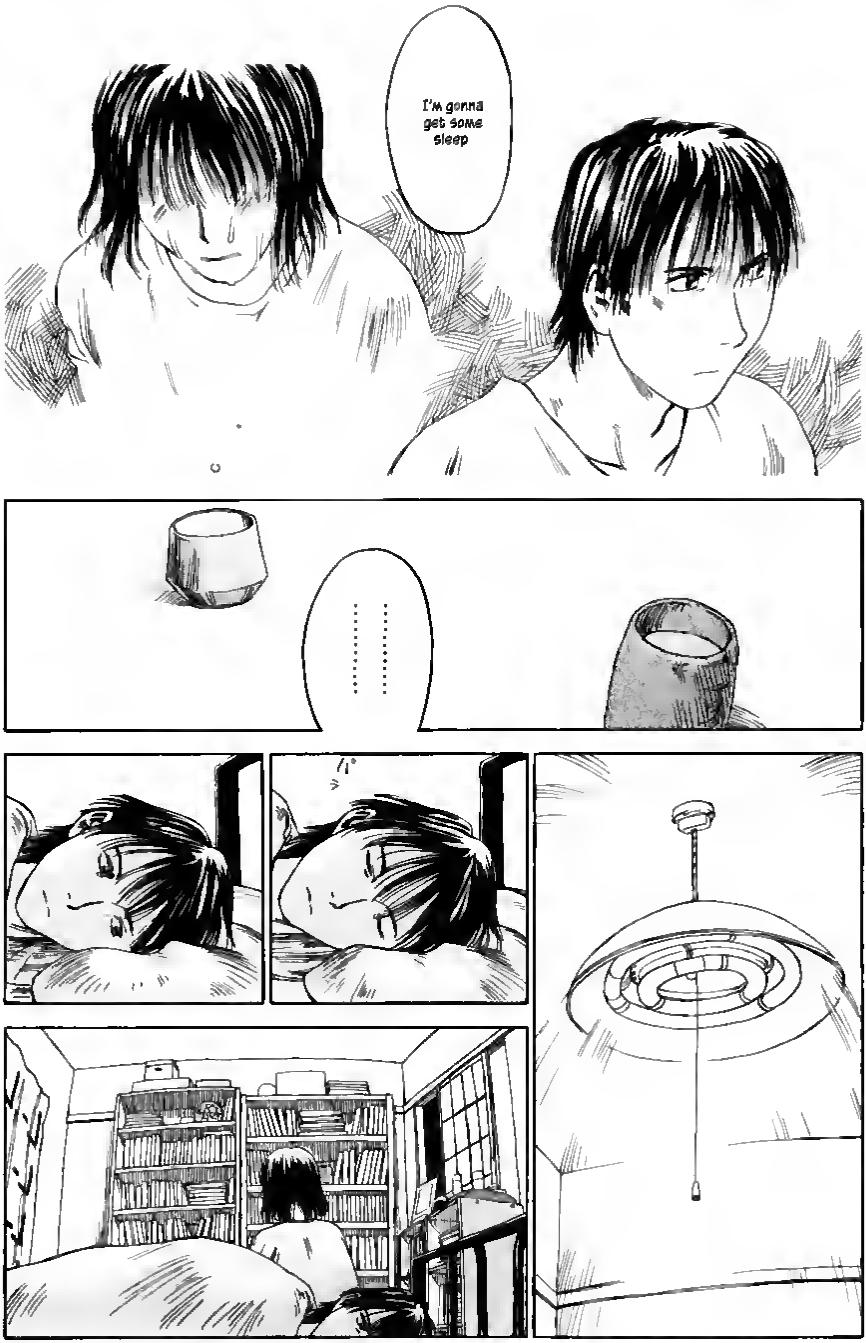
You really know how to make a guy feel like shit,
y'know that?!
So it's my fault now?

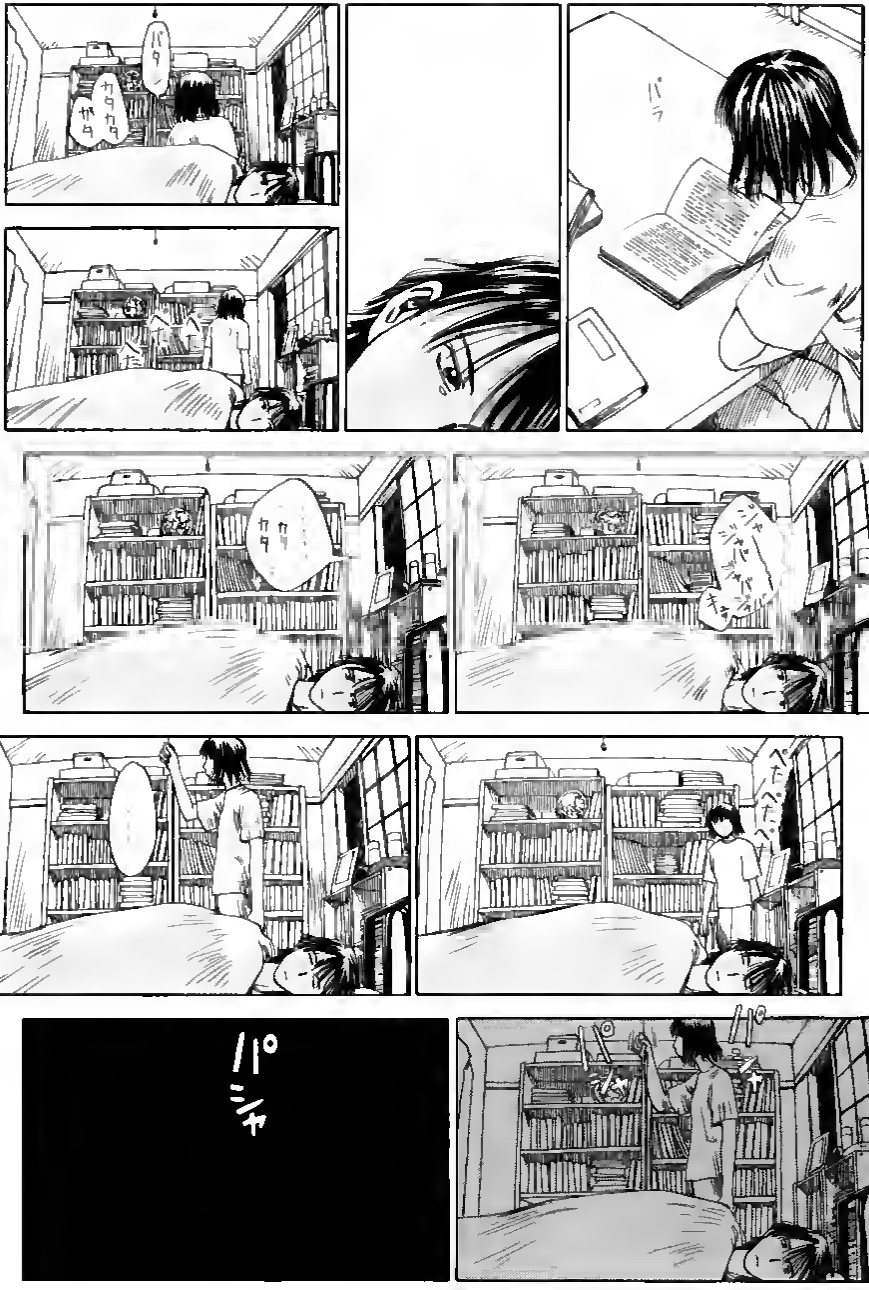
You know what, I think we just don't fit each other that well.
I'm going home.

Never mind, I'm staying
You can go now.
I ain't going

I'm not doing it with you tonight
WHO THE HELL SAID I WANTED TO, HUH?!
Ooh
BAH

I ain't leaving


I'm gonna get some sleep
.....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ﾊﾟﾁﾝ

Well, I'm leaving for school
I never get the chance because you always sleep in.
Would you dry out that blanket in the sun when you get up?
Are you still sleeping?
Nah.
Well, take care of that for me, okay?
Oh, and I might be home late today
So could you go and sleep at your place for tonight?
Don't forget the blanket!
Alright already!

ゴゴゴゴゴ
……
ガコン
THIS BED'S TOO DAMN SMALL.

ブォ
ハ゜ハ゜
ガゴ
ゴトン
ゴトン
ハ゜ハ゜
ブホー
ゴゴゴ
ギィィィ
ガシャ
ガシャ
Goddamn Tokyo dump trucks are too damn loud...
You really made it?!
That's great!
Bwahaha haha!
That was fast!
Yup! I really got a job!
HOW LONG ARE YOU GOING TO CELEBRATE?
Holy shit, you really got a job?
ガタッ

Probably studied ten hours a day, y'know
WHILE SKIPPING CLASSES
YUP YUP
EVERYTHING FROM GENERAL TO SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE
Course it is I studied my ass off
Wow
Shit, that's actually pretty impressive, man
YOU'RE SHITTING ME
Yashigo Insurance
HEHEH
So where are you working?
But yeah, to be serious for a bit
Call me crazy, but I think he might be growing up
I'll go down in history as one of the hardest working employees ever!!
I'm gonna work my ass off!
COCK A DOODLE DOO!
Tell us about it!
Mwa ha ha
I thought to myself, "I'm gonna get a job!" "I'm gonna work!" And voila! It happened
But really in the end it all boils down to how much you want it
GOTTA DIVE HEADFIRST INTO THOSE INTERVIEWS
She even cooked my meals for me every day and everything
I just couldn't stand by and watch you do what you call cooking Yusuke
Hey!
None of this would've ever happened if not for Naoko here
You know, I had a feeling that'd be it
WOW
And even besides that, she helped me write my thesis, get my documents in order, and even gave me counseling when I was feeling down!
STOP THAT YUSUKE!
It wasn't every single day, really
Yup!
Every day!? Breakfast, lunch and dinner?
That's incredible!
THAT MUST HAVE BEEN SO TIRING

IT'S THIS ALL YOU CAN EAT SKILL PLACE
Took her out to Bandyon!
Already did!
Oh?
Wow, you are such a cheap-skate
HAVE YOU NO SHAME?
Sounds like you'd better pay her back somehow.
So anyway, yeah. Naoko's probably gonna get a job as an office lady,
so it looks like smooth sailing from here on.
Wow!
YUSUKE!
Don't worry! This time, I'll support you! Leave it all to me!!
Really?
Not really, I think there's still a ways to go.
Whaat?
Hey, it's just the natural thing to do, right?
Shut up, Yusuke.
I give up! Fine, whatever, say whatever you want!

Whatever! Yoshino, let's have taa together, okay?
Fine with me.
Hmph
Naoko won't drink, so I need someone to celebrate with
Hmm?
Hey, Akio Wanna come over and have some drinks tonight?
Gotcha
I'll call you later, okay?
It's nothing. Just gotta head back home for a bit
Hmm? Where you going?
Welp.

.....
I was just thinking, you two are amazing.
It really comes through how you both try and bolster each other.
Something the matter?
Hmmz
Oh, no It's nothing.
We could never do that.

# Chapter 3: Drinking Parties and Tea Parties

……
ピッ
ピッ

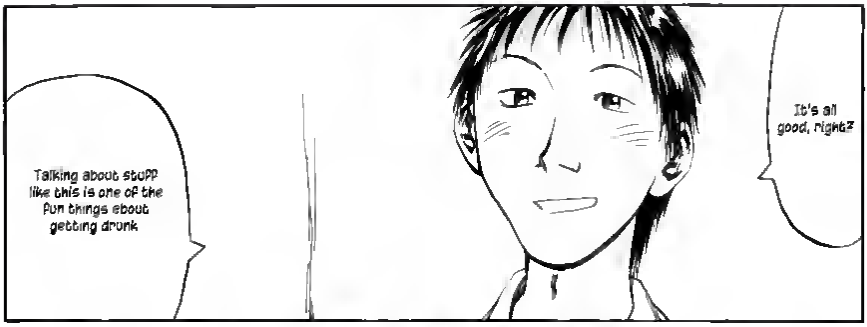
WHOA, MAN, NO WAY
They're probably just starting to really drink right about now, don't you think?
Yeah. It looked like they were really looking forward to it.
HMM? Oh, those two?

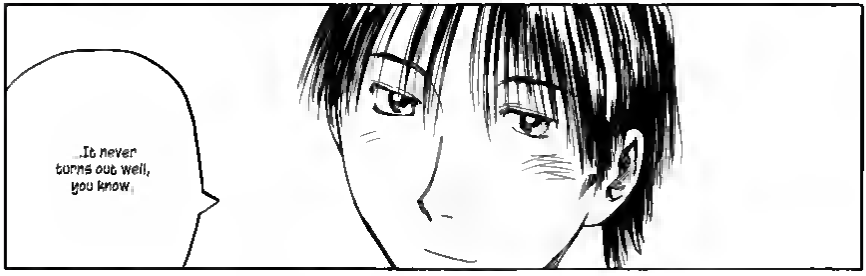
Sounds like him alright.
He likes drinking, but at the same time he's too lazy to do it often.
He's just the type who never drinks unless he has someone to get drunk with him
Akio hasn't been drinking lately, either?
Never mind, forget about it. It's too embarrassing to explain
You don't get it?
What?
YOU'LL JUST GET MORE CONFUSED
It's hwacha!
Hmm?
If you say it in Chinese, it sort of sounds like Bruce Lee.
Yup.
Jasmine tea?
But maybe it turned out there were people we came to dislike among that group,
and we stopped doing it because of them.
YUSUKE DRINKS A TON
Really? Isn't that just Akio, not everybody?
Well, maybe, but he's got a point.
Remember how when we were first years we'd always go out drinking to bring everyone closer together?
That when college students get into their third and fourth years they kind of stop drinking with each other. Too many secrets.
You know, a while back, Akio told me

Yeah. Akio's even more like that than most
they become set in stone, and you don't want to meet people from the outside.
It's like once you decide the borders of your world and your connections,
So you want to stay with what you know.
Familiarity is always comforting, after all.
I think you're right about that.
カラン
Yeah.
THE BEER JUST KIND OF DIS-APPEARED
Maaan I think we went in a little too hard. Shoulda gone slower.
Phew.

Things got pretty hot and steamy after that, y'see
She told me not to tell anyone.
もしゃ
もしゃ
HMM?
Who cares? It's good to cut loose after a long time not drinking
Actually, I drank with Naoko a while back
Are you sure you should be telling me this stuff?
It's fine, it's fine! Who cares, I'm drunk!
Whoa! I guess I am.
SEC. LEMME GET A SMOKE
Bwa ha ha
Shit, man you're wasted

Hmm?
Shit's hard lately, ain't it.
Huh, really?
But I mean, we're drinking to celebrate you getting a job. I don't wanna drag my own shit into this.
Well... Yeah, can't deny that.
Course not.
You really aren't gonna drop this, are you.
WHAT IS THIS AN INTERROGATION?
Don'cha know, drunk people are required by law to get up in people's faces.
Well...
What's she gonna do about the bar exam?
I hear Yoshino's getting a job at a firm.


It's all good, right?
Talking about stuff like this is one of the fun things about getting drunk


...It never turns out well, you know.

Mmm.
Though, you ask these sort of questions even when you're sober, anyway
I think that people who can only really talk when they're drunk are trouble-some.
Yeah...
Troublesome, eh? Pretty polite way to say they're a pain in the ass.
MY KIDS'S ALL GROWN UP NOW

I've been thinking, maybe I really should get a job, you know? I'm a little worried about that
Well, for starters
I mean, I'm not avoiding employment 'cause I've got any sort of real plan in mind
I'm laughing at myself
Worried, he says, with a smile on his face
I never figured you for the type to care about that, to be honest
Well, if it was just me, then yeah, I wouldn't give a damn
I try and pretend like I don't care, but... You and I both know it's nothing to be proud about, after all

The closest person to me who isn't me, you know?
Yeah
Lemme guess. Yoshino?
Huh. Can't say I was expecting that
But damn, man, is it okay for you to tell me this kinda stuff?
Though I only have her word for it
Yeah, but she's only had sex with two of them, as far as I know
Since around middle school
But from what I can tell, I don't think she's ever not had a boyfriend, know what I mean?
Huh?
"All the other guys"? Has she really seen that many?
All the other guys she's ever dated have turned out to be losers or something
She's actually really worried for me, I think

She just kinda stands out naturally, you know? She's smart and she's sexy.
EVEN IF SHE'S PRETTY FLAT
Well, it's not like she ever went around looking for guys.
Okay, I'm cursing myself now for ever using that one.
Who cares, I'm drunk.
...she sort of has that scent of a bitch in heat about her...
I guess...
If you know what I'm saying.
I just don't want her to be embarrassed about me.
Never mind. Forget I said it.
What?
Huh?
Can't say I really get where you're coming from.
.....

That's why you're worried about this. Am I right?
You and Yoshino're having problems, ain't cha?
Sounds more like you're bragging, actually.
I mean, how's that a problem at all?
It's like, if I don't keep up and do well, she'll throw me away...
What?
That's what I was afraid of all this time.
Yeah, that's it.

Because it felt like she wasn't really coming to like me no matter how much time we knew each other...
Yeah... I see it now...
Come to think of it, I was the one who asked her out...
Yeah, that was it. That was it all along
Dude, you just realized that now?
Well...
I SEE IT NOW
SHIT. YEAH. THAT'S IT
I'm scared
Damn, looks like he's really worried about this
.....

Dammit, I really fell for the worst kinda girl, didn't I...
Hahaha
SHIT
Oh... Uhh... Really?
I mean, as it stands right now, I'm just like Yoshino's other boyfriends, the kinda useless bum she could probably dump without a second glance...
カラーン
Still, I mean... She's the only girl who'll sleep with me, you know?
Mmm...
So does that mean, if she stopped sleeping with you, you'd break up with her?
What? Dude, it's important
CAN'T IGNORE IT NO SIR
Is that really something you wanna be bringing up like that?
カラカラ
Err... Uhh... Right...

But if we'd never had sex from the start, we probably wouldn't be as close as we are now
If she suddenly stopped sleeping with me now, then yeah, I think things'd get pretty rocky between us
Whoa
Yeah
Well, maybe.
Though it's a pain in the ass to really talk about
I like to think she feels the same
Huh.
It bugged me even after I asked her out, even after she said okay,
even after we had sex for the first time
It'll probably keep bugging me even if we get married and have kids
It's never gonna end, ever
This sort of shit's gonna keep bugging me.
but it's not like I can avoid it forever.

It's making a relationship with another human being. Of course it's hard.
Hell, it's the kinda thing that might not end even then.
Probably till the day I die.
So you're just gonna drink and be merry, eh?
Welp. Not that worrying about it now will get me anywhere.
I wonder what they're talking about right now.

Like, "Did you know Yoshino is a tiger in bed?" or something...
Weird?
I've actually been feeling like someone's talking about me for a while now...
Well, you know, they're drinking
Maybe Akio's saying some weird stuff...
You know how people get when they're drunk
What? Stop that! No way!
Can't let the guys have all the fun. C'mon, do you wanna share some secrets?
Ahaha
THE WOMEN ALWAYS END UP WITH THE SHORT END OF THE STRAW
No, I'll pass I feel like it'd come back to haunt me somehow
.....
But you know, somehow it feels like ...
Like he's probably complaining about me, actually

You two really are alike...
Right. Well, anyway...
Nuh?
You think so?
Wow, you sound so much like Akio when you talk like that!
Yeah, we've got a lot of problems, that's for sure
Sounds like you've got something in mind when you say that...
Hey...
Ack...
Yeah? Anyway?
I feel like I'm acting the same as ever, but...
WE'RE TALKING ABOUT YOU, YOSHINO
Well, that might be because you are, you know...
...He's been saying that I'm acting cold toward him lately
SPEAKING OF COLD, THE TEA'S COLD TOO
Really?
A while ago he actually got really mad at me over it

He told me, "You really know how to make a guy feel like shit."
He got really mad about it
Wow...
To tell you the truth, it was a bit of a shock
I mean, I'm not the sort who thinks that women are just there to support men and nothing else, of course
But still, hearing something like that from my boyfriend...
It felt like he was saying I was a failure as a woman.
That's just men being dumb

Maybe I just don't mesh with guys very well...
Well, I kind of messed up with all the guys I've dated before, so I was thinking...
Well... I mean, yeah, but...
Think about it. You're the one who always gets asked out, right? Not the other way around.
It was like that with Akio too, right?
Mmm...
What? No, what makes you think that?
But you're still popular with them nonetheless, right?
Well, to be honest, there've been guys I've dated before knowing I'd break up with them later,
but it wasn't like that with Akio
What? No way.
YOU VIXEN
You've got something about you that just pulls men in.
But setting that aside, you have to agree that part of it's my fault.
Huh?

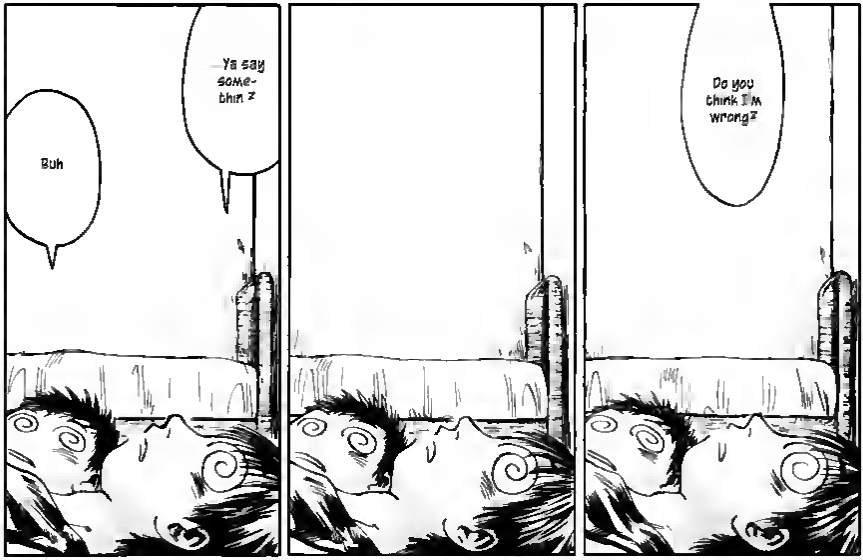
Back when we first started going out he used to bend over backwards for me, but now?
You really are a vixen
Akio's been getting sort of uppity lately, you know So I was thinking of teasing him a little
No no, I was just thinking
What.
You guys are at that point already?
I think things might get really shaky between us if I don't make an effort to be kinder, actually
No, I'm joking
Well, yes, technically, but I've gotten to like him too much
I don't feel like I'd be able to give him up now
If you guys are really having that many problems, can't you just break up?
Is it really worth the effort?

Probably
Hmm?
Umm
Does that mean what I think it means?
As long as you treat it seriously, I think it's fine.
Really?
That's not what you were implying a moment ago.
Oh?
I mean, it's not like sex is really something we can't talk about, right?
I don't even really get cranky during my period, these days
And a lot of times I sort of stop while saying or doing something and realize, "Ah, I guess I really am a woman," you know?
I'm pretty okay with the fact that I'm a woman.
Not just the sex part, but the everyday parts of it too.
Actually,

I think there's no denying that part of me...
That scant of fundamental femininity...
.....
Hmm?
You think that might be why you're so popular with the guys?
.....
I see... Just female and male, huh...
You're making me out to be some kind of animal
Mmm...
.....
That might be it...

BWAHAHAHAHA
Ah, you're right... Feels sort of like an instinctive thing, doesn't it?
EVERYTHINGSH SLIPINNING
It feels like accepting it like that is a pretty feminine thing too, you know
RAAAGH
AAAAAH
Sort of like, whether our relationship works out well or not depends just on ourselves as a male and a female...
Now that I think of it that way, it does make a lot of sense
Well, anyway I don't know what the men are thinking, but...
Both are valid options
Keep seeing him, or just make a clean break

It feels like, all that's left to do from there is to try our best.
Things get a little easier if I keep that in mind.


Huh
Ya say some-thin?
Do you think I'm wrong?

Whoa
Ooh.
Huh?
Hey, Yuusuke
Boh
I'm going, okey?
Wha?
I said, I'm going home
Get some sleep on your bed, men
Here, I'll clean up a little 'fore I go.
Blergh... I think I drank too much...

Welcome back
Huh?
Wait this is my place, right?
Yup
Yeah I can see that now The bundle of employment pamphlets gives it away
So what's up?
Here, water
I had a feeling you'd be drunk and might need some help
You didn't even know I'd be coming back home tonight.
I was going to wait another five minutes and then head home.

Really
Oops
Whoa
Hey!
Man, I haven't got drunk like this in a long time
Did you really drink that much?
Yeah. Lots
What?
Nothin'
I'm gonna go to sleep, so you can go now

Hmm?
Dummy. Why would I wantcha to have to bother lookin' after a drunk
Well if you insist, I can leava...
どすっ
Whe?
What was that?
Uh?
Ugh he stinks...
Whuh?
I'm sorry
きゅ

I stink of booze, don't I
Yeah. Yeah, you do.
You will?
I'll stay until you fall asleep
I will Now come on, change your clothes and brush your teeth
HURRY UP

ハッ
カチ
カチ

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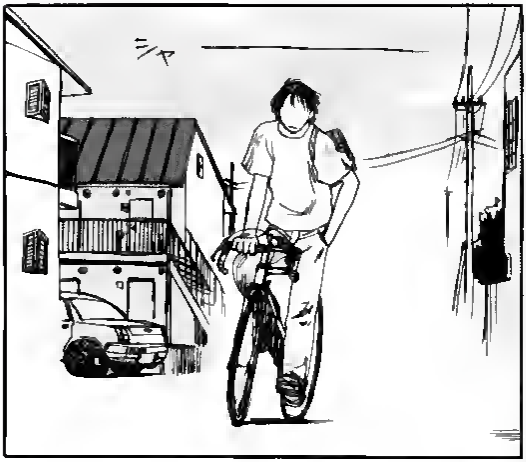
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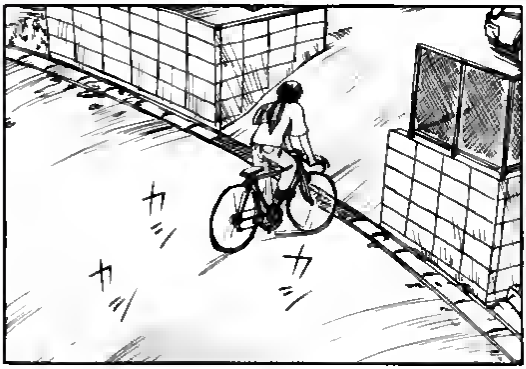
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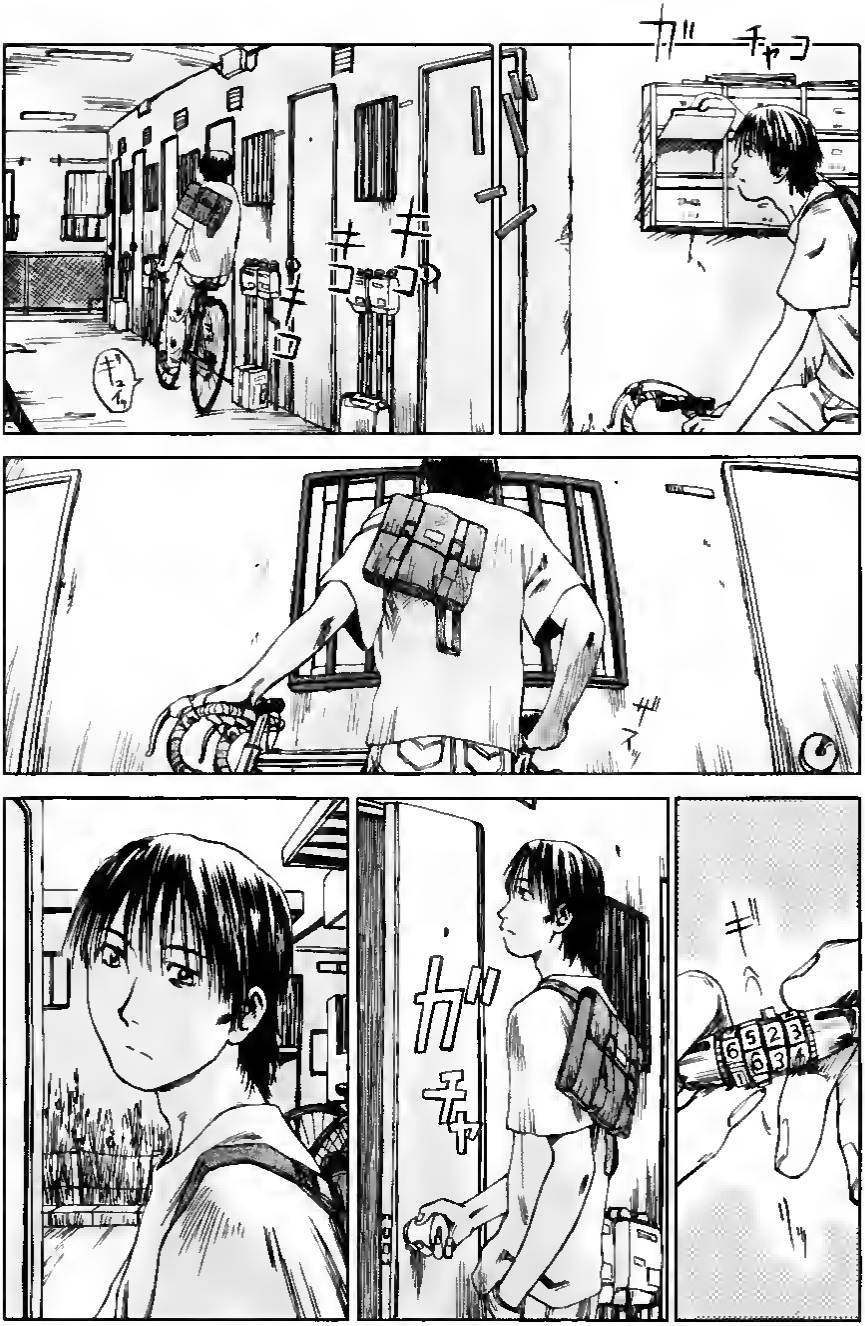
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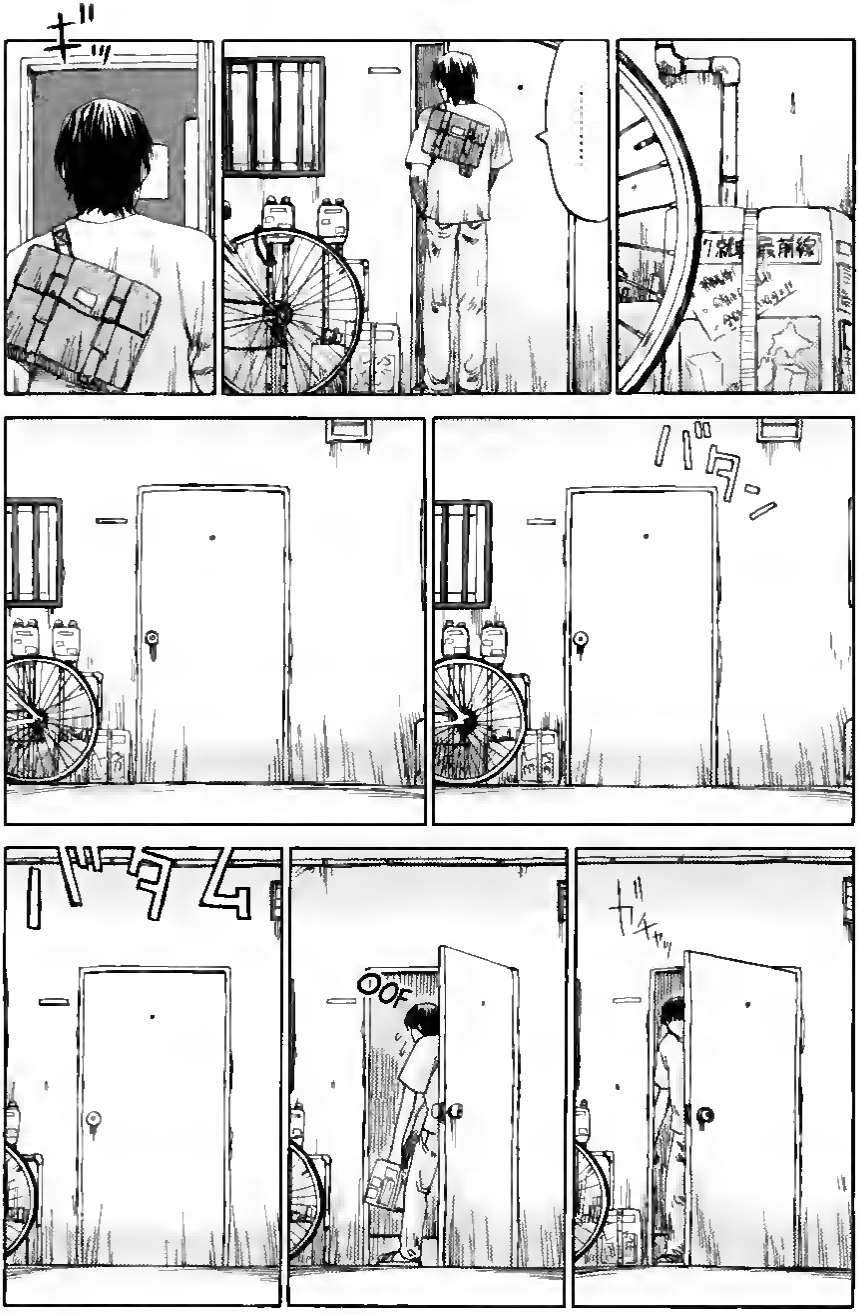



*Chapter 3 End*

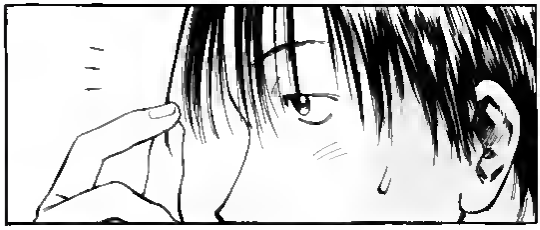
# *Chapter 4*
# *Job Hunting*

The hell's going on here...

Hrm.
Well, for starters you'll have to ask about 50 companies for information materials.
What?
It's not as bad as it sounds. It's not like you're gonna apply to all of 'em.
Some people even get hundreds of those documents.
It's the least you can do right now to go out and gather this information yourself.
I REALLY WANT TO GET INTO SHISEI. DO
YEAH, BUT YOU SHOULD LOOK INTO NIK TOO
Mastering General Education
What're these?

That's all well and good, but how about you cut your hair, first?
You're going to have to visit these places in person too, right?

Well, I had all these postcards for requesting info brochures
So I thought I'd try and send 'em in.

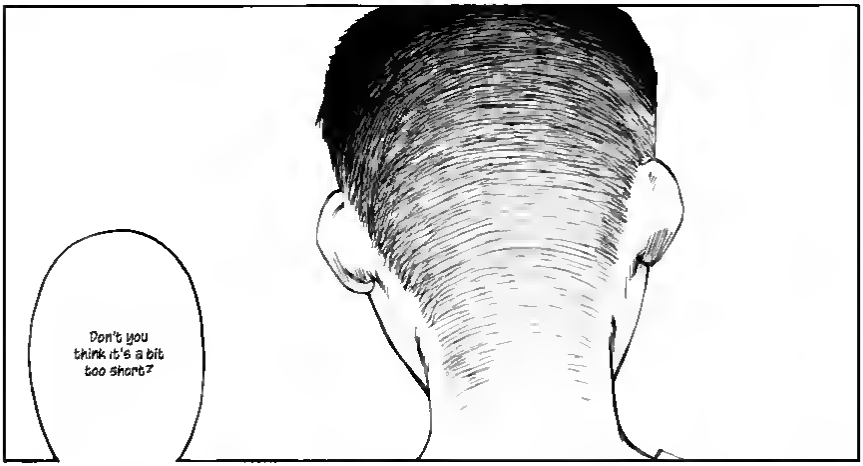


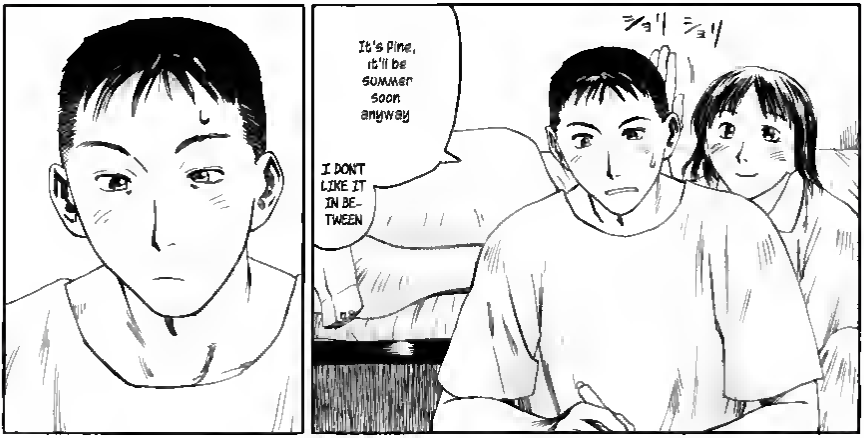
Damn, what's with all these people? It's just some documents...
WELL, THAT GOES FOR ME TOO I GUESS

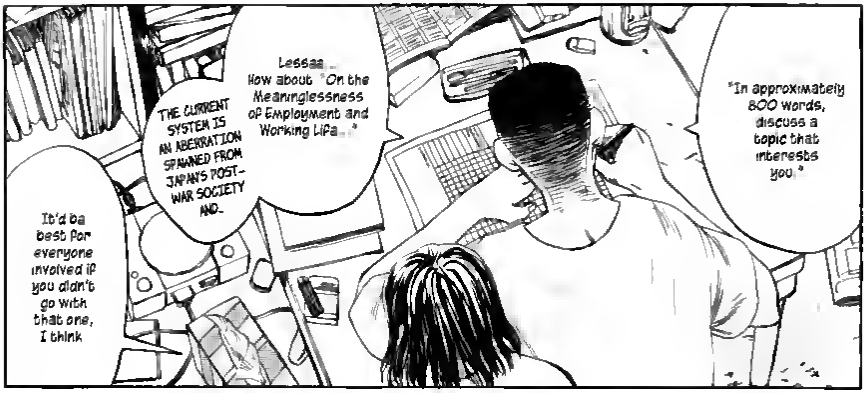
You've got to have this stuff as a foundation just going in.
And this, it's a collection of newspaper articles, edited by category.
And of course some gen ed workbooks.

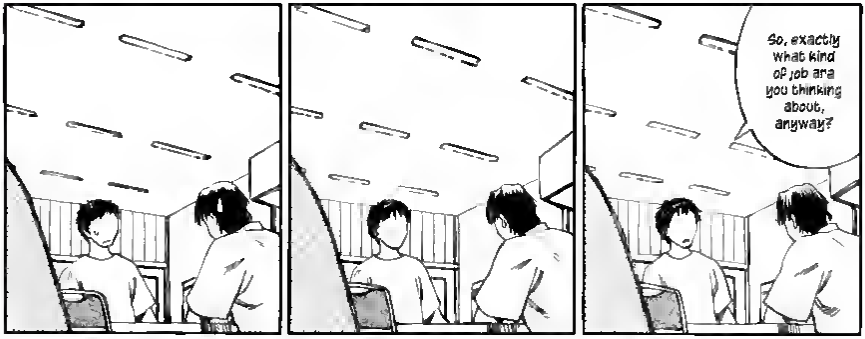
Huh?
Alright, now you should be studying stuff like this
Kanji Quizzes
Keywords
1996
1997

Then you start studying whatever you need to for the specific job you're thinking about
And then you take your tests


Don't you think it's a bit too short?


I DON'T LIKE IT IN BE-TWEEN
It's fine, it'll be summer soon anyway
ショリ ショリ


"In approximately 800 words, discuss a topic that interests you."
Lessaa... How about "On the Meaninglessness of Employment and Working Life...?"
THE CURRENT SYSTEM IS AN ABERRATION SPAWNED FROM JAPAN'S POST-WAR SOCIETY AND...
It'd be best for everyone involved if you didn't go with that one, I think

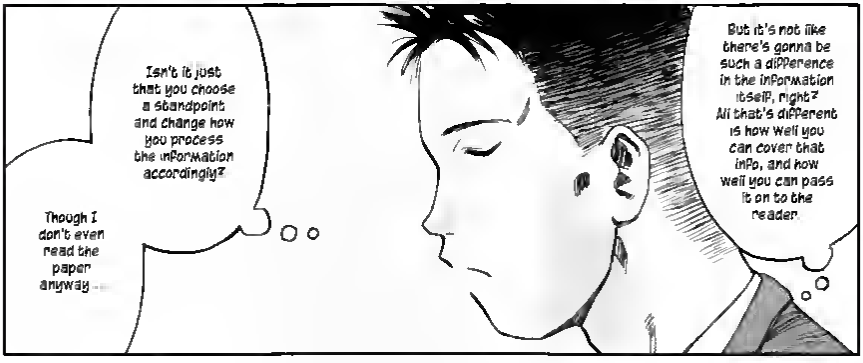

So, exactly what kind of job are you thinking about, anyway?

You do your best too, Akio. ♡
Ri, right
Do your best.
Yaah
I just need to be myself. It's just an interview.
Bye, then.

I also have to come up with avenues of attack. That is, how to effectively market goods to consumers.
It requires me not only to break down sales figures but also keep an eye on the trends of society as a whole.
For example, my job involves researching market tendencies.
Ahem. As you may already be aware, not everyone who works at a department store mans a counter and sells goods.

I don't know a goddamn thing about trends, though...
I dunno if this is the right kinda job for me...
MAYBE THAT'S A DUMB QUESTION

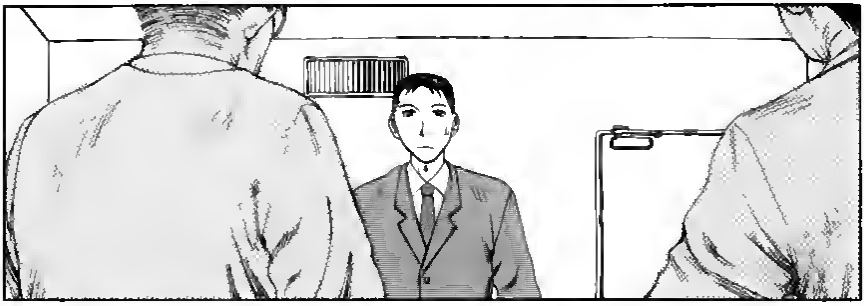
and as such they are made to appeal to various demographics.
The truth is that even newspapers have their own characteristics,
I'm assuming that most of you only subscribe to a single newspaper.
FOR EXAMPLE -

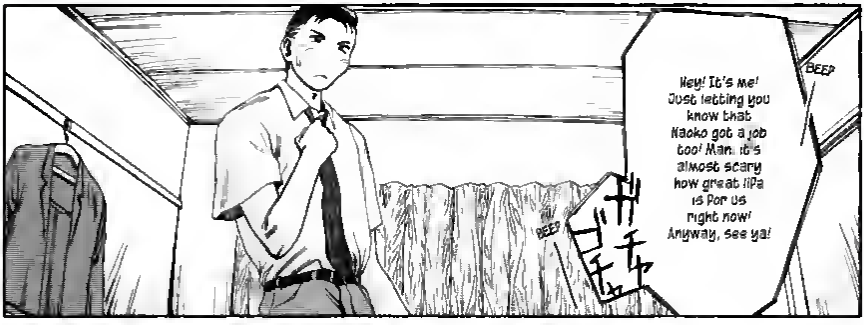

Though I don't even read the paper anyway...
Isn't it just that you choose a standpoint and change how you process the information accordingly?
But it's not like there's gonna be such a difference in the information itself, right? All that's different is how well you can cover that info, and how well you can pass it on to the reader.

I know
Yeah, but I mean, I've got the resolve to make it work if they'd just hire me, you know
If you keep talking like that, then nobody's ever going to hire you
Well, I'm the one who told you to get a job first and think things over later,
but I think that you can afford to sit back a little and do what you feel is best
Hmm
and get a job at whatever place will take me, for starters
Maybe I should just make a compromise,
もぐもぐ
Well, I'm going with something a little in between
I'll sort my choices out into the places I want to get into and the places I know I can get,
or maybe I'll decide first whether I'm gonna narrow my search or widen it
SOUNDS OBVIOUS
Besides that
What I feel is best is just not working, y'know

What?
I can tell you're not used to telling me that.
Good luck!
Mmm
Here goes nothing...
Welp

Does the Employment Agreement being scrapped really hurt you that much?
Well, yeah. All the guides written with it in mind are kinda useless now.
And companies are recruiting earlier and for longer than before, too.
IF I WERE TO TRY AND SOUND LIKE I KNOW WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT. HA




Hey! It's me! Just letting you know that Naoko got a job too! Man, it's almost scary how great it's for us right now! Anyway, see ya!
BEEP
BEEP

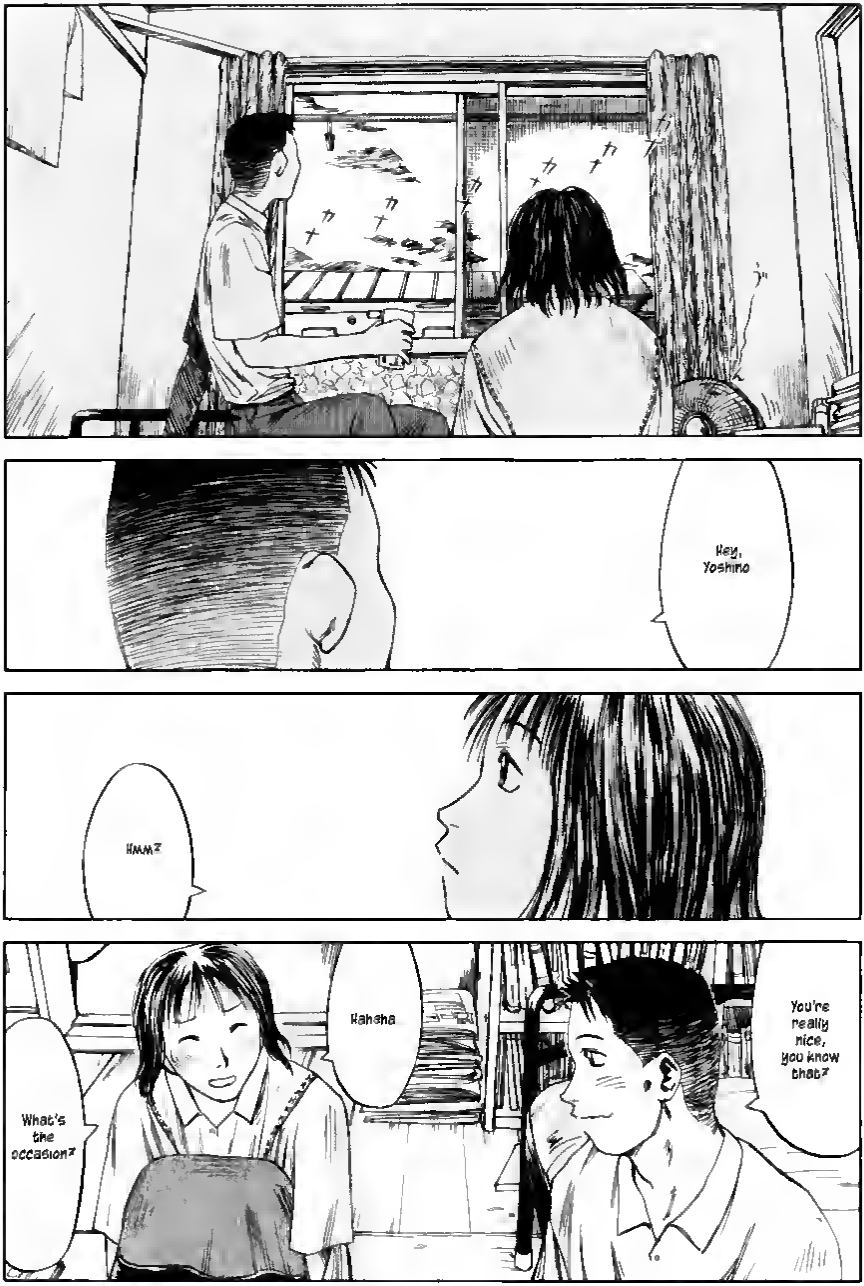
Hmm?
Oh, sorry.
You're busy,
right?
Mmm
Yup I
got the
job
I JUST
WANT A
JOB,
ANY
JOB!
SOMEONE
HIRE ME!
It's all a bunch
of "we regret to
inform you"s and
"but we look forward
to seeing you again
in the future"s
Yeah, well,
I'm getting
the results
back from
here and
there

ふしゅ

BLARGH.

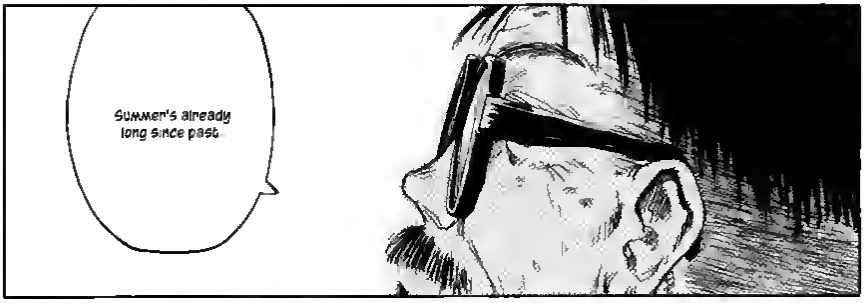
Take a rest, you deserve it
It's finally over.
ドスッ
ガシガシ
Ugggh.
Say that I don't get accepted anywhere
Am I gonna have to do all this over again?
Hmm?
Hey
Oop
Yeah, thanks to the Agreement going belly up. Some places're starting their employment drives early, but others are actually going for it later than normal.
SO I'M GUESSING THERE'LL BE SOME LEFT
Are there even any companies left that're looking for new employees right now?

ポポポポ
You really think you have to do that?
You did your best, didn't you?
For three months straight, even
Well, you can't go and confuse your personal sense of satisfaction with actual results, you know
WHO TOLD ME THAT AGAIN?
Right
ゴクゴクゴクゴク
Phew...
Aaah!
That really hit the spot
Haha

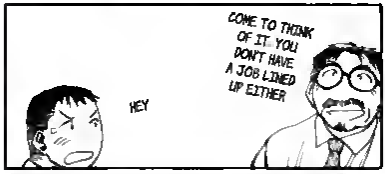

カナカナカナカナカナカナ
Hey, Yoshino
Hmm?
You're really nice, you know that?
Hahaha
What's the occasion?

I was just thinking, you're so good to me that I feel like I might catch flak from some feminist organization for it or something.
What?
WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?
Think about it. You make me tea and cook my meals and stuff. Come to think of it, you do that kinda thing for me pretty often.
I'm doing it for you because I want to.
That's what I'm saying. You're just naturally kind.
Well
THAT'S INSULTING
I'm not doing it because I think it's what a woman should do for a man, you know
PHEW
What's with you today?
Huh?
Nothing, I was just thinking.
Were you

Were you hoping I'd say something like, "Wow, Akio, you've really changed"?
Dummy. That wasn't what I... I mean, that's not... Well, you know... Right?
No, I can't say I do.
う——ん
—This feels kind of like the sort of conversation you'd see in a romantic comedy.
Not like anyone watches those for the conversations, anyway.
カナカナカナカナ


Summer's already long since past...

I won't let you graduate without turning one in, let me make that clear...
And you know how sad it'd be to have a job lined up for you out of college and be unable to graduate...


COME TO THINK OF IT, YOU DON'T HAVE A JOB LINED UP EITHER
HEY

I know, I know, Professor.
And yet I still have a student who hasn't even turned in the first draft for his thesis. Wonder who that could be, eh, Shima...

I think that's enough teasing, sir.
YOU CAN STOP NOW
Well, that's that then
Three... eh

He still has three places left, Professor.

You know what really gets me mad, though?
It's the really wishy-washy refusals you get sometimes.
I mean, it's like, what the hell IF you're gonna tell me no then just say no, know what I mean?
They have their image to look out for, I guess.
Yeah, I guess.
Oh
Oh?
You're not going to open it?
I will, I will
Oh

Too bad...
Uggh...
Heh. Yeah
PHEW
Oh well. Shit happens and all, I guess

Akio
Yeah?
.....
Did you just breathe a sigh of relief because you didn't get hired?
Hmmm
Err... REALLY IT'S NOT LIKE THAT
.....
What
Of course not

Huh?
Did you really hate the idea of having a job so much?
"I showed everyone I did my best, so now it's okay even if I don't actually get the job"?
Were you thinking,
...Don't get so mad at me If I get hired I'm gonna work hard
Don't tell me you slacked off on purpose so you wouldn't get-
...Wait.
No, it's not. Well...
Maybe a little?

Ugh

I mean, yeah, sure, I wanted everyone to see I was trying, and it's true I'm not exactly crazy about getting a job,
but even I'm not dumb enough to bust my ass for three straight months just to put on a show
Am I really that hard to trust?!
ARGH!
I guess I'll just never be trusted, no matter how much I try
But hell, can't say I don't deserve it
Ah...
No...

Hmm?
I'm sorry
Me too
I...
I was scared, you know
ぎゅ
You've fallen for a time-honored trick we men use often
Huh?
First we scare you with a show of force, and then we show a more vulnerable side right after.
Then you feel so relieved that you fall for us even harder.
Watch out for that sort of thing.
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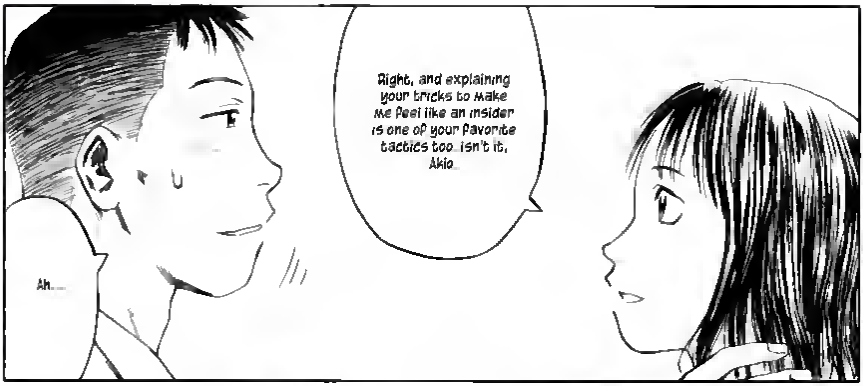
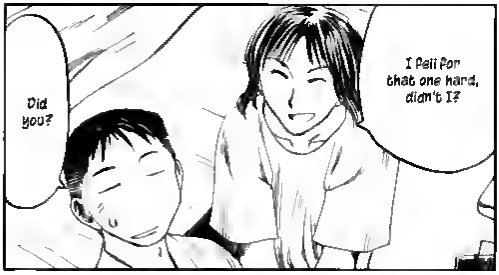
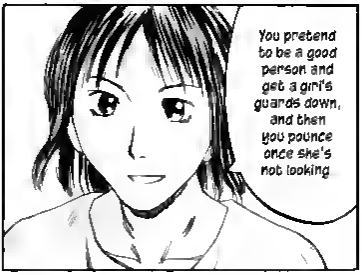
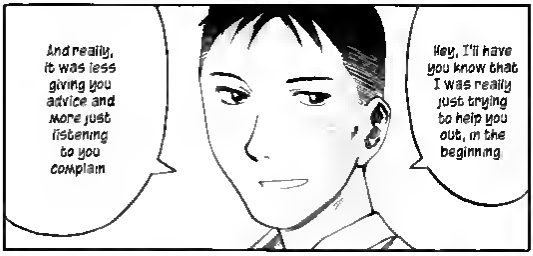

Right, and explaining your tricks to make me feel like an insider is one of your favorite tactics too, isn't it, Akio.
Ah...

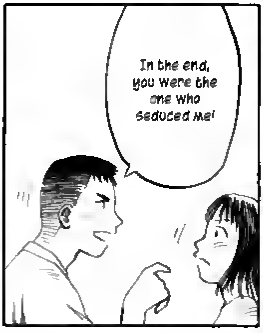

I felt for that one hard, didn't I?
Did you?

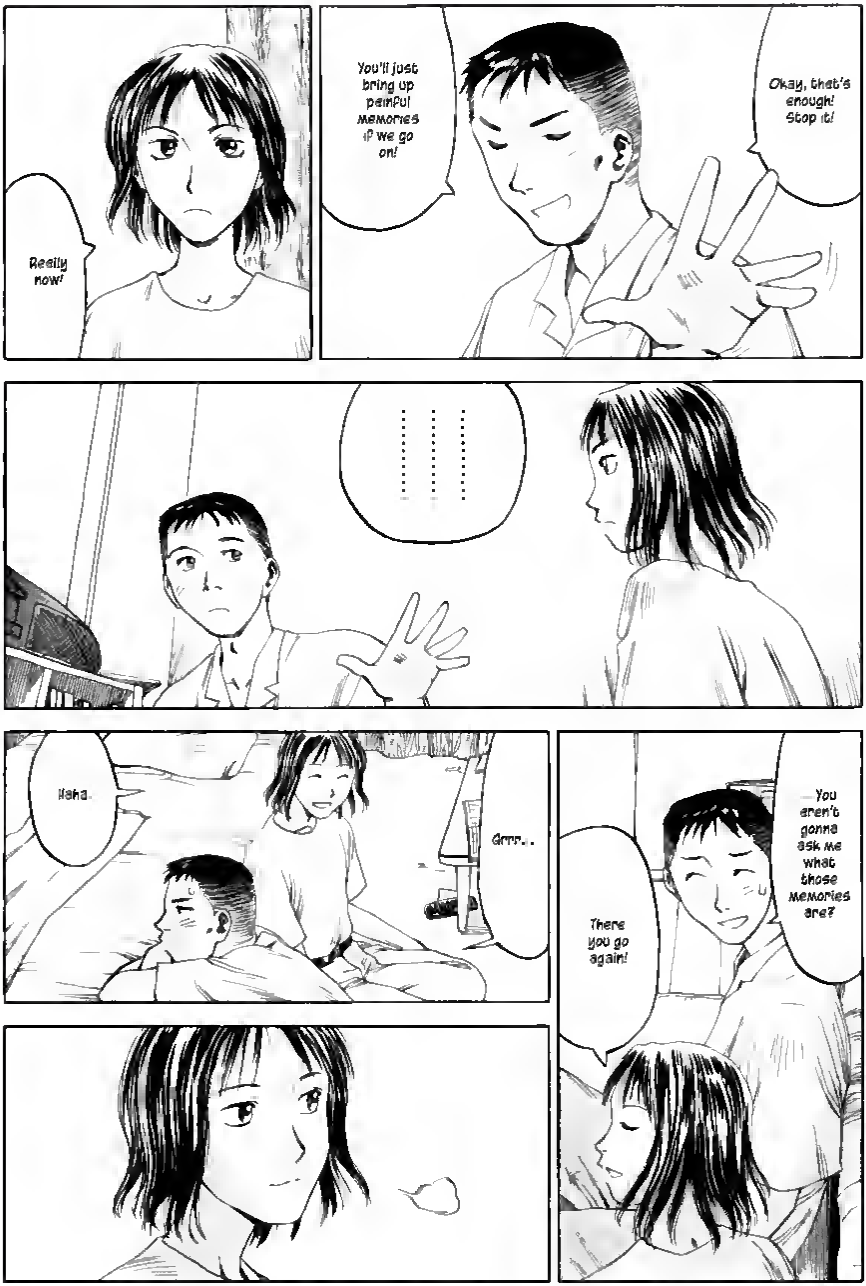

You pretend to be a good person and get a girl's guards down, and then you pounce once she's not looking.

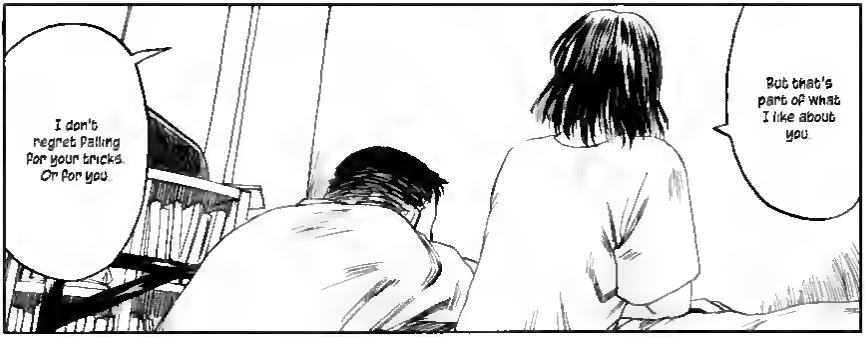

And really, it was less giving you advice and more just listening to you complain.
Hey, I'll have you know that I was really just trying to help you out, in the beginning.

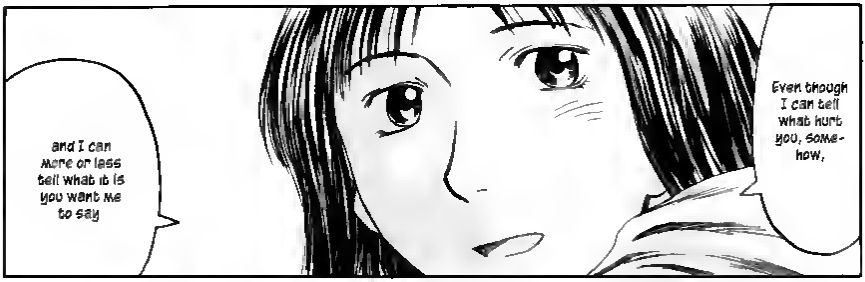
Mhmm.
Remember when I was having problems with Kawai, and you pretended to give me advice?

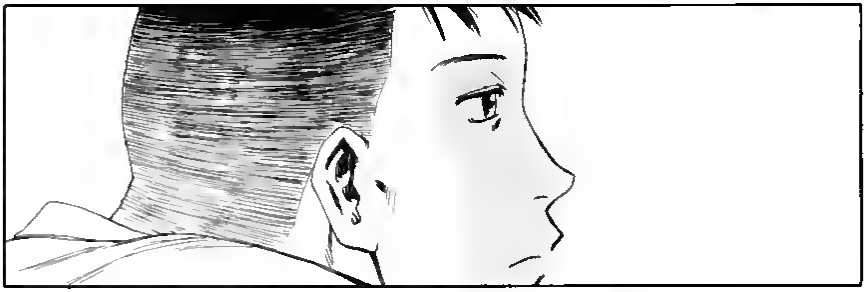
That's only because you looked like you wanted to sleep with me so much, Akio!
What, am I wrong?!

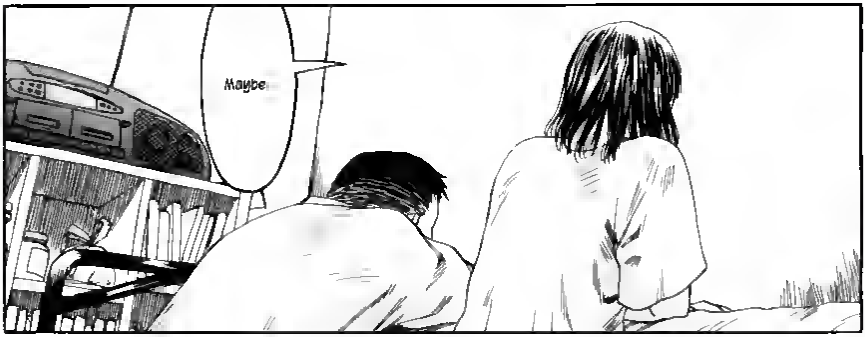

In the end, you were the one who seduced me!

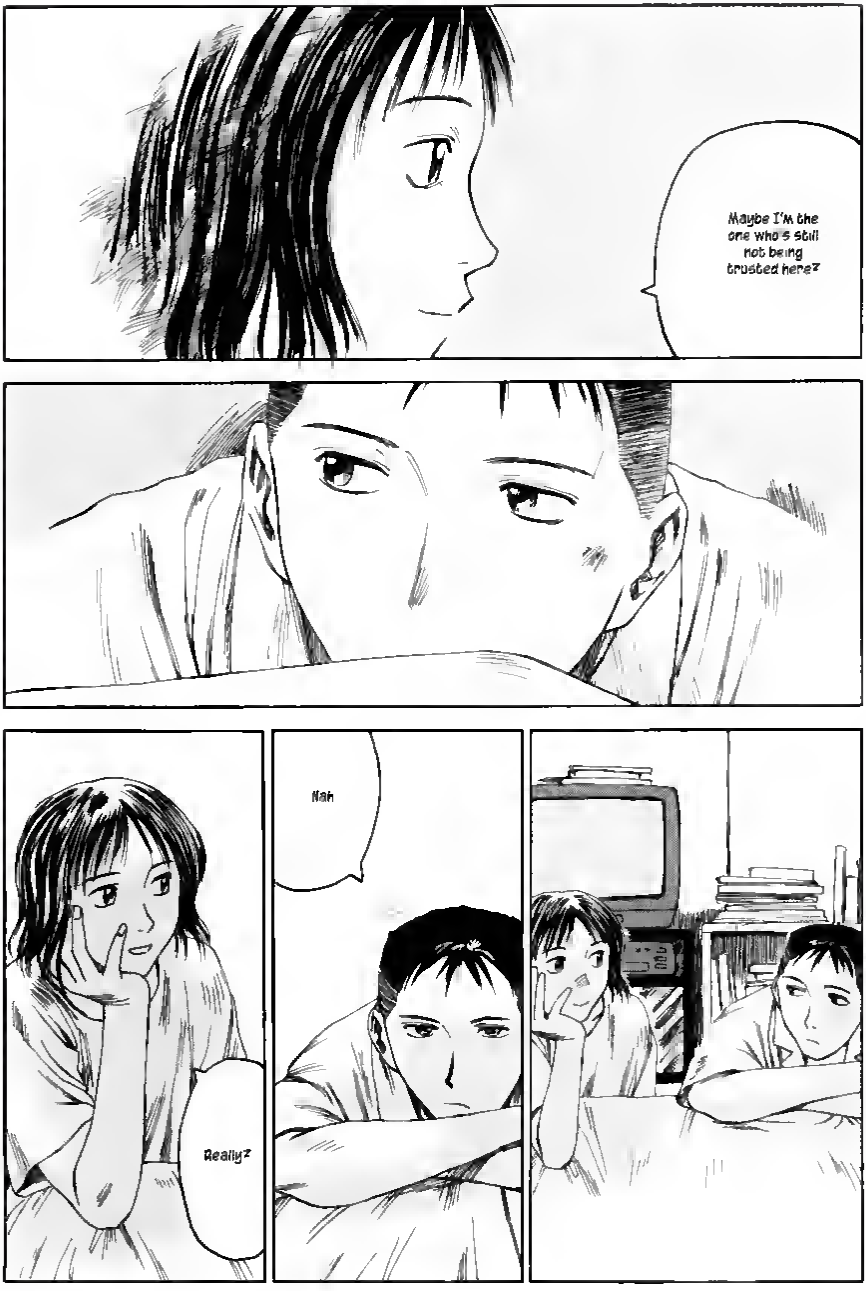

Really now!
You'll just bring up painful memories if we go on!
Okay, that's enough! Stop it!
Haha.
Grrr..
There you go again!
You aren't gonna ask me what those memories are?


I don't regret falling for your tricks. Or for you.
But that's part of what I like about you.

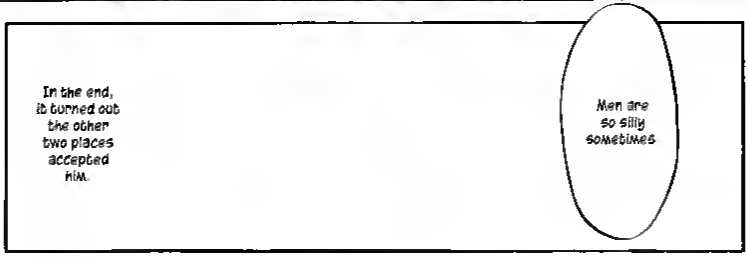

and I can more or less tell what it is you want me to say.
Even though I can tell what hurt you, somehow,




Maybe.


Maybe I'm the one who's still not being trusted here?
Really?
Nah

If I don't make any of these pieces are we gonna break up?
We're not breaking up.

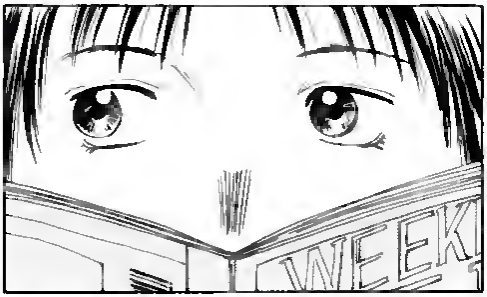



*Chapter 4 End*

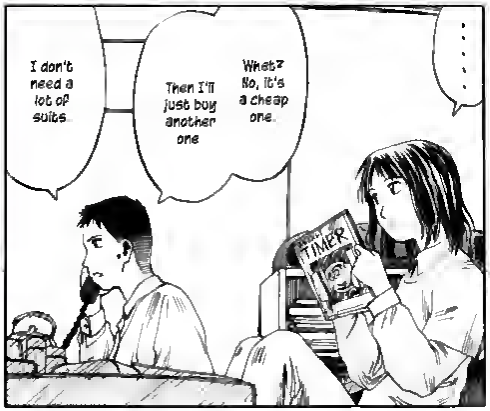
# *Chapter 5*
# *Parents*

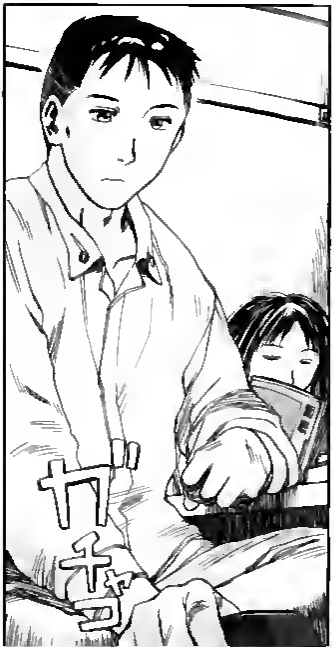
Akio
1 year and 2 months old

Yoshino
1 year and 1 month old


WEEK

Huh?
No, it's okay, Dad. Yeah. Really. I have one already.


I don't need a lot of suits.
Then I'll just buy another one.
What? No, it's a cheap one.
.....
WEEKLY TIMER



Why waste the money on that?
Ah. Yeah, okay. Fine. Whatever. No.

Huh? Yaah, I'm eating well.
Yeah, yeah, I get it. Sometime. Yaah. Okay. Bye.
WEEKLY TIMER

Hmm...
Not like you lose anything from having more, either
Why didn't you just let him buy you the suit?
Huh?
Not like I need more than one.
Move the table over a little, would you?
Huh?
フォ
カリ
Yeah, yeah, turn on the fan.
If you're going to smoke...
What's that?
Never mind
What?
What're you talking about?
It's not that you don't need more suits. It's that you're embarrassed to have your parents concerning themselves with your life, right?
It's that, isn't it?
カサガサ

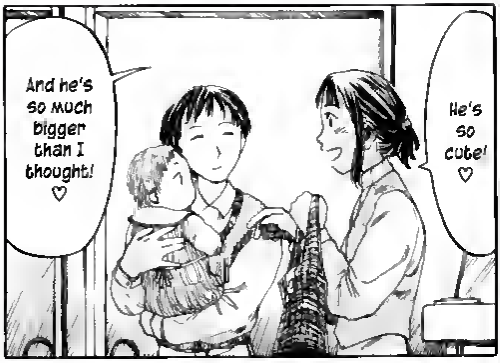
You know, isn't it harder for people who obsess over having their parents let them go to actually become independent?
Yoshino, do you really think you're cut out to be a lawyer? That's way too direct to work in the courtroom
Don't worry, I only talk like this to you
YOUR WAY OF TALKING IS CONTAGIOUS AKIO
I really don't think you should be so concerned about it
To parents, their children are always their children first and foremost
You said you wanted to see the baby, right?
Wanna go?
There you go again with the non sequiturs
Were you thinking this stuff all along?
Mhmm
WEEKLY TIMER

Hmm...
I get that, but still...
Well, you were talking about parents and kids and so...
I mean... You know... 'Cause it's close by
TIMER
so I suppose just a day off wouldn't hurt too much...
Well, you did finish a rough outline for your thesis,
And then maybe we can go visit my parents place after that!
...Just to set things straight...
Got it
not "We're not breaking up no matter what."
When I said, "We're not breaking up," I meant "We're not breaking up because of employment issues,"

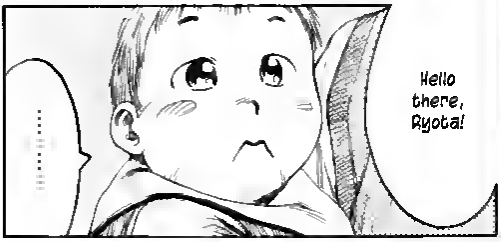
Come to think of it, I'm the one who asked you out first,
so that puts me in the weaker position right from the start
Guess I'd better step it up
Haha, no, it's just that if I don't remind myself then I start getting really cocky
You don't need to put yourself down like that on purpose, you know
Mhmm
Really
Huh
What gives?
Umm
I mean, you don't have to if you don't want to
Really?
Huh?
Okay, let's go visit your parents too

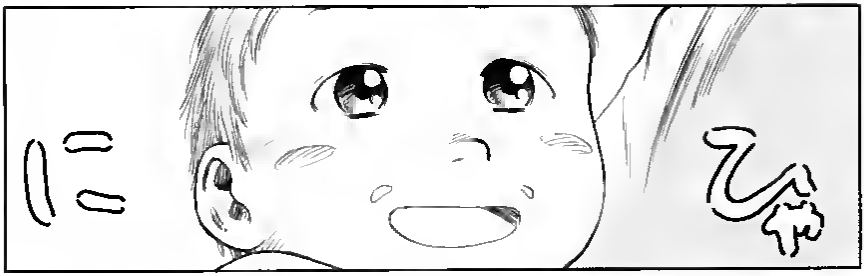
We're going to keep dating even after we graduate,
So I feel like I should at least introduce myself to your parents.
So hey, how about I go visit your folks too, then?
Yeah, I guess.
Hrrm
What's wrong with your father?
?
Nothing much.
Let's go on a weekday, so my dad isn't there.
Well, since you're going...
Maybe later.
Never mind.
Fine with me.
It's just, I know him. He's gonna tell us to get married or something.

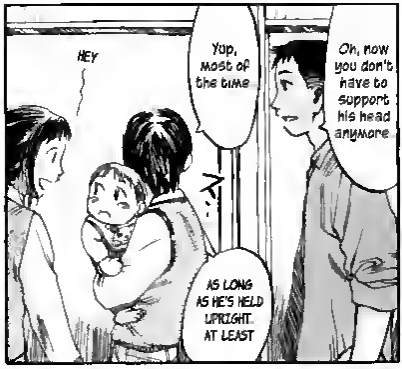
To him, life is just one two three: graduation, employment, then marriage.
Thing is, my dad's got a one-track mind.
Well, no, I don't think it's quite that bad...
Wow, that's so terrible!
Huh? Oh, no reason.
Why'd you suddenly sit next to me?
and then go over to my parents' place and have lunch there. How's that sound?
どす
Alright. First we'll drop by Yoko's place and see the baby.
Okay.
I'll let you decide when to go.
Well, I don't really mind talking about that sort of thing.
THINKING "I'M GONNA HAVE SEX!"
.....
THINKING "ACK. HE WANTS TO HAVE SEX"


He's so cute! ♡
And he's so much bigger than I thought! ♡

Wow! ♡


Hello there, Ryota!
.....




HEY
Yup, most of the time
Oh, now you don't have to support his head anymore
AS LONG AS HE'S HELD UPRIGHT. AT LEAST

He can smile now, huh?
Aww, he's smiling!
Mhmm. GOOD FOR YOU, RYOTA!

It'd be good practice for when the two of you have your first baby.
Oh, well
What? Really?
Okay, do you want to try holding him?
Still got a long way to go on that one.
Oh, sorry I thought that you two were
All I said was that we wanted to see the baby
Don't look at me
.....
Yes, please
You want to hold him?
Well, practice aside .

Okay.
There we go.
Umm.
Uhh.
Like this?
I thought you had a little sister?
That was a long time ago!
It's better if you switch arms
.....
Wow! He's smiling!
What?
You love young women already, don't you, Ryota?
GOOD FOR YOU
Is that what it is?

Might wanna wait till you hit one year old at least, buddy
Mhmm
He always smiles and laughs when I take him to meetings with other young mothers.
Huh?
Nah, I'm fine.
Want to give it a try too, Akio?
You're not bad at this
I'm remembering how to do it a little
Haha
I'll probably suck at it.
No, really, I'm fine.
You sure? You're the one who should be practicing this, don't you think?

Hey
Come over here
Okay?
It'll be fine
Come on
YOU JUST WON'T GIVE UP WILL YOU
I dunno, he keeps poshing me with his arms and legs I don't think he wants this any more than I do
Ahahaha!
Huh?
He's looking at us like he wants us to save him
Uhh...
He looks like he's going to cry
He does, doesn't he?
He's about to cry!
HEY WHOA
Ah, there he goes
WAAA
Hahaha
Yoko, help me out here!
Glaagh

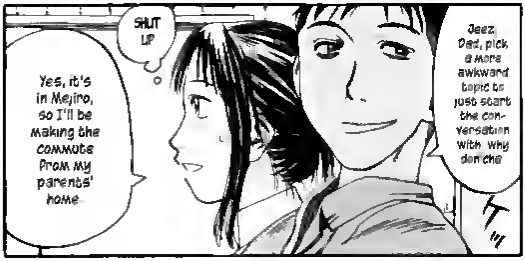
Yeah...
Kinda felt like I was being denied as a human being...
It's pretty flustering, having a crying baby in your arms, right?
Man, I just don't click with babies
It's just a matter of practice
I guess we were like that too, when we were babies
Everyone is...
.....
If you're that worried about the term, I could give you the legal definition...
Parents
...and children, huh...
Alright, then. Ready to go see my parents?
Mhmm. It's just one station over, right?
You know that's not what I'm talking about
Mhmm.

Ah
COME TO THINK OF IT, YEAH
I'M SURE IT'LL BE ALRIGHT. DON'T SWEAT IT
WELL, YOU KNOW ME I KIND OF HAVE A HARD TIME HIDING IT WHEN I DON'T GET ALONG WITH OTHER WOMEN
ガタン ゴトン
HUH?
NO, IT'S NOT THAT I'M ACTUALLY A LITTLE WORRIED ABOUT YOUR MOTHER...
IT'LL BE FINE, REALLY. MY DAD'LL BE AT WORK
ガチャ
HEY, MOM! WE'RE HERE!
A LITTLE...
NERVOUS?
OH, AND HELLO THERE!
OH! HELLO! MY NAME IS SOMA YOSHINO! I'M SO PLEASED TO MEET YOU!
YOU SOUND LIKE COMPLETELY DIFFERENT PEOPLE.
BOTH OF YOU
WELCOME HOME, HONEY
ただいま

Oh?
Ah, so you're home
Why
You
What
Here?
How
YOU WHAT?!
I took a day off
Hmm? You mean, why aren't I at work?
That's enough
Hello, Mr Shima
I'm Soma Yoshino. Pleased to meet you
Ah, welcome
I'm in the same year as Akio, and we have the same major
Yes, I've heard all about you
COME MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME

You were going to work at a firm after you graduate, was it?
Well, then

Thank you
Lunch is almost ready, but in the meantime, feel free to help yourself to some snacks.


SHUT UP
Yes, it's in Mejiro, so I'll be making the commute from my parents' home.
Jeez, Dad, pick a more awkward topic to just start the conversation with, why don'cha

Even compared to when I was a little girl, it's changed a lot.
Oh, yes, it has.
I'm sure it's changed a lot since then.

Really, now. You know, we used to live there a while back.
BEFORE AKIO WAS BORN
HUH
SO BEFORE I WAS BORN, TOO
Oh, really?
Oh? And where do they live?
Over in Koku-bunji.

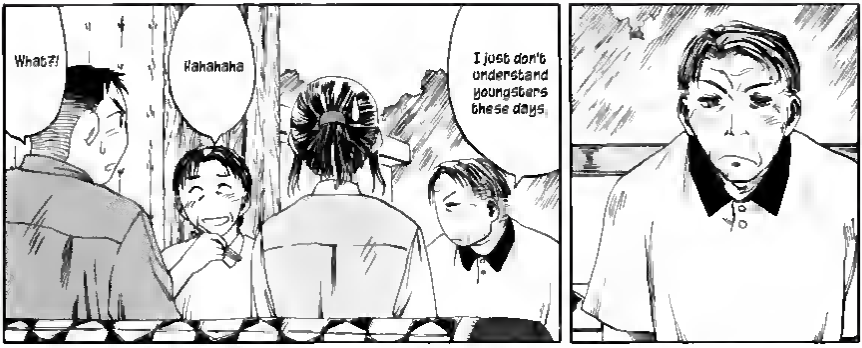
WHAT'RE YOU DOING DAD
I hope he's at least been eating regularly
Mmm So, how's Akio been doing?
Oh, umm Yes, he's doing fine
Hah. Please feel free to feed him.
SHE MEANS ALMOST NEVER
SHUT UP
I mean! Not that often, mind...
Well, to be honest, his eating habits are well...
I mean, I do cook meals for him every so often, but
I'm "untidy," am I
Huh
Akio is very untidy, isn't he
Oh, not at all
Ah, yes, I'm trying...
Do try and keep him out of trouble, dear
OR ARE THEY JUST SAYING THAT FOR HER SAKE?
ARE THEY LETTING GO OF ME A LITTLE?

Ah, right
Excuse me
May I use the rest-room?
Man, there's nothing to talk about
.....
You need to go through the kitchen
What, the bath-room? Over here
Down at the end of the hall
Oh
Umm, yes I am
A little nervous, aren't you
I think Akio's father is, too
Don't let it get to you too much
Oh Right. Thank you
Mmm. I know
She's not just a pretty face, y know
She's quite beautiful, isn't she
.....

Honey, could you bring out some beer?
Alright.
You sure you're gonna be okay eating all this?
THERE'S GONNA BE CAKE AFTER
Wow, this looks incredible!
Dad! It's the middle of the day and you're already drinking?!
What's the problem?
You're going back by train, aren't you?
I don't mind.
AKIO COME HERE AND HELP ME WITH THIS
What?
Besides,
a little alcohol will help get everyone talking.
What's gotten into Dad today?
They really are a lot alike

Thank you.
Really?
This is delicious!
It's amazing!
GULP
Wow.
Cooking is a thing that only gets better as you practice.
Haha.
It's so much better than anything I could make.
No comment on that one.
Oh... really?
You shouldn't be talking about that.
I CAN HEAR YOU
Really?
So what? That doesn't matter, does it?
Mmm...
Once I start working, though, I'll be living at home,
so I probably won't have that many chances to cook my own meals
ダーン!
That's exactly the problem here!
Right!

When're you going to find the time to get married?
Working is all well and good,
but if you're too busy with that...
.....
I knew you'd start with that... That's why I wanted to visit when you weren't here...
Oh, my. You've had a little too much to drink, dear.
We'd just break up, that's all.
It's too eerie to be talking about that kinda thing, dammit!
What's so bad about what I'm saying?
Who knows what could happen from now on?! For all you know we could run into problems tomorrow!
That would certainly be bad.
Not really.


What?!
Hahahaha
I just don't understand youngsters these days.

Back in my day, we had we had... Right. We had a sense of responsibility!
The kind of responsibility that comes from being bound to a contract!
And only once you uphold that contract can you walk with your head held high, as a member of society!

Erm... Well, I mean, yes
But, if I may, I want to try and expand a little on what Ako was saying earlier

Uhh, Dad? I don't think that has anything to do with anything
WE'RE TALKING ABOUT MARRIAGES NOT CONTRACTS
Of course it does!

If my dad's drunk, he never changes his mind once he's made it up
Don't you agree, Miss Soma?!
Umm! Right!

We don't want to promise each other our futures,
and then live our lives complacently because of that
I think that what Akio means is that we should try our best to make our relationship work by ourselves instead of hiding behind a promise, and in the end, if it doesn't work out despite that, we should be able to acknowledge that and move on
WHAT?
Mmm.
Yes, yes. You have a point
Mmm.
You never know when it comes to people, after all
ぱくぱく
As a matter of fact,
It's because I loved Yukiko so much
that I worked so hard

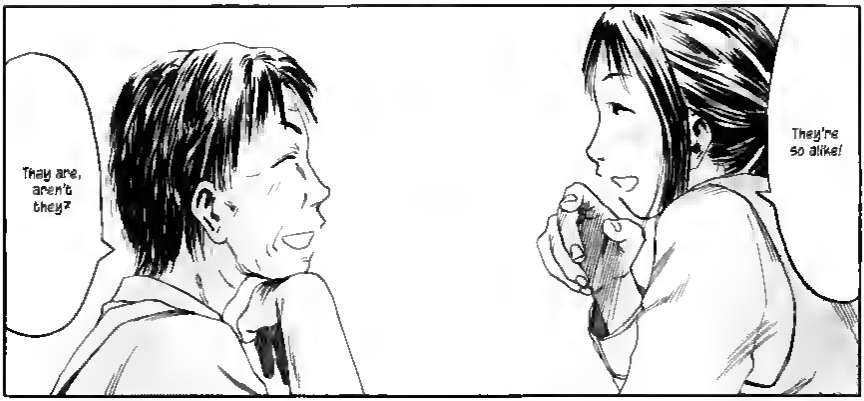
So I worked, and worked, and worked, and worked some more, and then we got married
Honestly, dear
Hmm?
Yes, that's true
キラー
I thought you had an arranged marriage
Wait,
That was a bit long...
Huh?
by that time, I was already doing work that I could be proud of!
And of course,
I saw her a few times at festivals and I fell for her head over heels
So I built up some connections and managed to arrange our marriage
DEAR!
Yukiko was one of the prettiest young women in the next town over, you know

How come I never heard any of this?
.....
Umm Right...
It means I had to work even harder to provide for us both...
And d'you know what getting married like that means?
Wha
All I needed was you, Yukiko!
You know, I didn't even need a son!
Yes, dear
Isn't that right, Yukiko?
That's because it's nothing bit for a child's ears!
You're right
Mom, heat up some sake
Get him smashed and put him to sleep
Hear that? Seems my dad didn't want me
MUST BE WHY I'M A SINGLE CHILD...
Dear! That's quite enough!
But Yukiko just wouldn't stop going on about how much she wanted a kid, so...

Gotcha
so you can just lay him down there
I put a futon down in the bedroom.
WUH
I'M FINE
NEED HELP?
AHH
I AIN'T EVEN DRUNK YET!
I'LL DRINK YOU ALL UNNER THE TABLE!
C'MON, YOU CAN AT LEAST TRY TO WALK BY YOURSELF
BUMP
Oh? Does he get like that when he's drunk, too?
He gets about as loud, yes.
DON'T TRY TO GET UP. JUST GO TO BED
I was thinking,
Akio really is a lot like his father.
I'm sorry you had to see that.
I don't mind

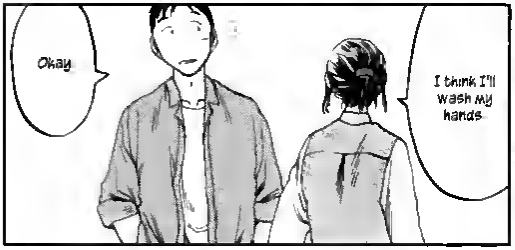
SNRRR
QUIET DOWN
I tend to take charge and I'm the eldest sibling in my family, so it actually works out alright
Oh, does it?
HMM
We did our best to raise Akio well, but Well he's not very responsible, is he
You know
I actually knew about him before the marriage, too
Yes?
Going back to the topic of my marriage
Huh?
?
Then he forgot, maybe?
He does I told him just a little while after we got married.
Akio's father doesn't know?
Oh
Pardon?
Oh!
Oooh!

It might be that he's putting himself down on purpose
Oohh
So that's what it was!
Oh


They're so alike!
They are, aren't they?

What time is it? Already four, huh
We should probably head back soon, maybe after I rest a little
Mhmm

I'm what?
Ah
It's nothing


I think I'll wash my hands
Okay

Hmm?
What?

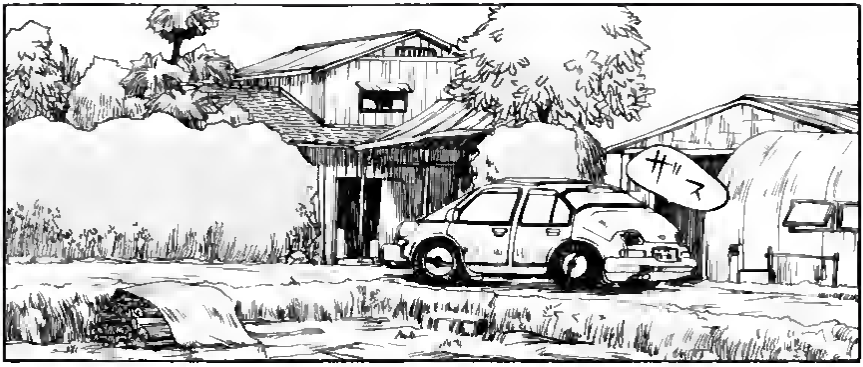
Phew
Man, I'm kinda pooped

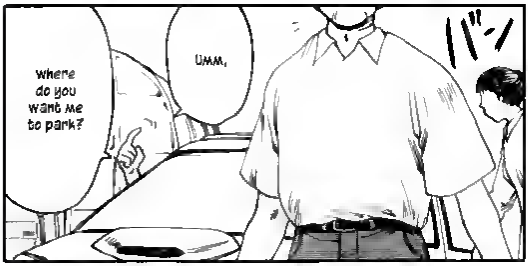
Huh
You think?
She seems like a good person, you know...
Nothing.
Honestly
Coming!
JUST A SECOND
YUKI KOOOO!
C'MOVER HERE

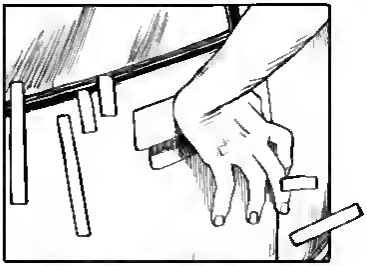
ガタンゴト——
That was a strange day
ガ
Huh? Oh, yeah. Yeah, it was.
I've never seen my dad like that before.
Yup, yup
Feels like we experienced three whole generations today, huh.

He had a pretty eventful youth, didn't he?
Hahaha, yeah.
So how about my mom?
Bad? Good?
Hmm? Oh...
Well... I think I liked her...
Okay.
ガタンゴト――
ガタンゴト――

I'm fine if you want to go to a restaurant,
or if you want me to make something
So, whatcha wanna do for dinner?
Hmm? We're going to eat together, right?
I dunno, you must be tired too. How about we go get something to eat tonight?
MAYBE SOME PLACE NEAR THE STATION
Well, considering how good lunch was, you probably wouldn't want my cooking right after—
ガタンゴト——
ﾊﾅ


ガラ

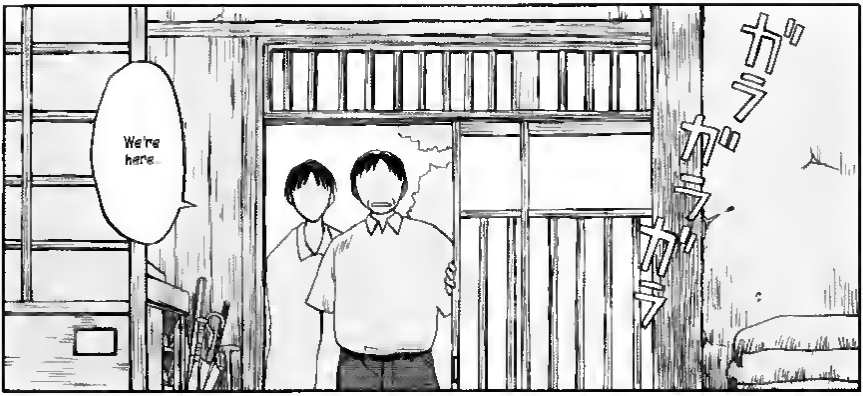

Where do you want me to park?
Umm,
バン



Hurry up and come inside after you park, Mahiro!
It's fine, they're not in right now.
Is it okay to park there?
Over there, under that roof.

Gotcha.
3
カコッ

*Final Chapter: Ocean Breeze*


We're here.
ガラガラガラ

It's so good to see you again, sister.
Mhmm

Oh, come in.
Mmm

The doctor was in around noon. Mmm He says that.
カラカラカラ

How is he?
Why don't you have a seat, Pinsb?

So, how's Dad?
He's asleep right now. Mother's looking after him.

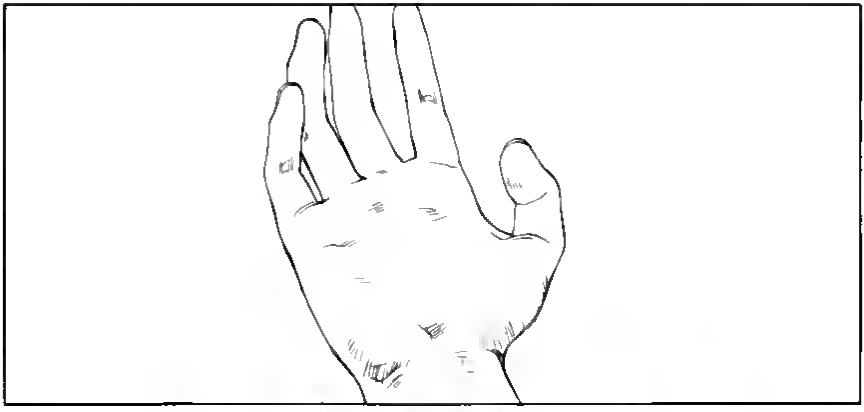
He's stabilized a little,
but to be honest, it wouldn't be strange if he passed away right now
Sounds bad
Still more or less how I told you over the phone
He can't speak
I think something's wrong with his brain
OOF
If you hold his hand and talk to him then he clenches your hand in return
So we think he can understand what we're saying
Oh, Mahiro Welcome
Hello, auntie
Mmm

He went out to look at the fields and just collapsed all of a sudden...
He was old but always healthy, and now this happens...
Never even saw this coming... Dammit
Oh, Mother How is he?
Mother
Ohh Umm Yeah
I see you came too, Mahiro
He's opened his eyes
Do you want to see him?

Of course, dear.
Huh? Me too?
Alright, let's go and see him.
. . . .
I'm sure it'll make him very happy.
Come and say hello to your grandFather, Mehiro.
Hey, Dad!
I wonder...

This is all because you never take a moment to relax! You've got your age to consider!
What were you thinking, just up and falling over like that?!
You scared the pants off of me, you know!
So don't think you can die on me and run away, Dad!
And don't think this is the end of it! I've still got a ton of things to complain about to you,
Just hold his hand
Don't worry about that
What am I supposed to say?
Mahiro, come over and say something to Grandpa too, will you?
Father!
Please get well soon, okay?

!
He's still strong
LIMM
ERR
LIMM
ACK
GrandFather Mahiro has come to say hello



He's gotten a lot weaker
Could you expect anything else, after he collapsed like that?

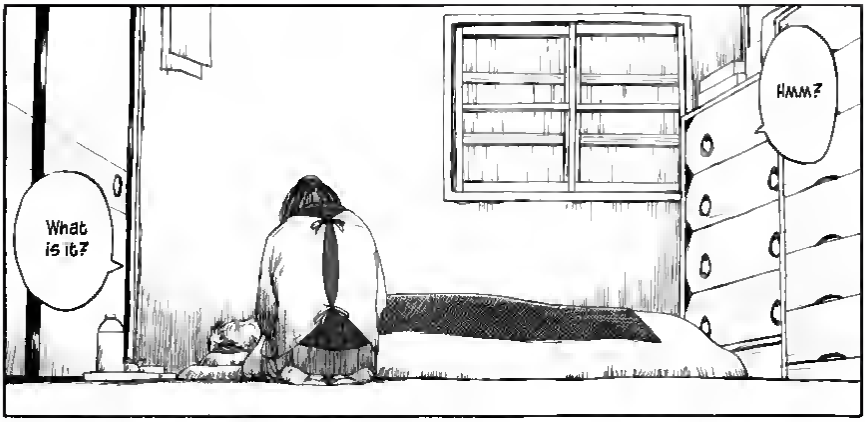
IT WAS SO SUDDEN...
HMM...

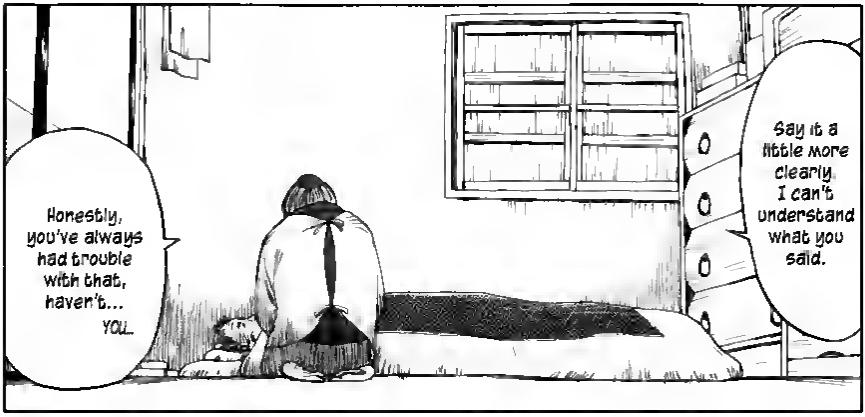
I think we had a good run, don't you, dear?
I think we can pass on and leave the rest up to them now
Our grandchildren are growing up strong and healthy...
I'll follow right after you.
.....

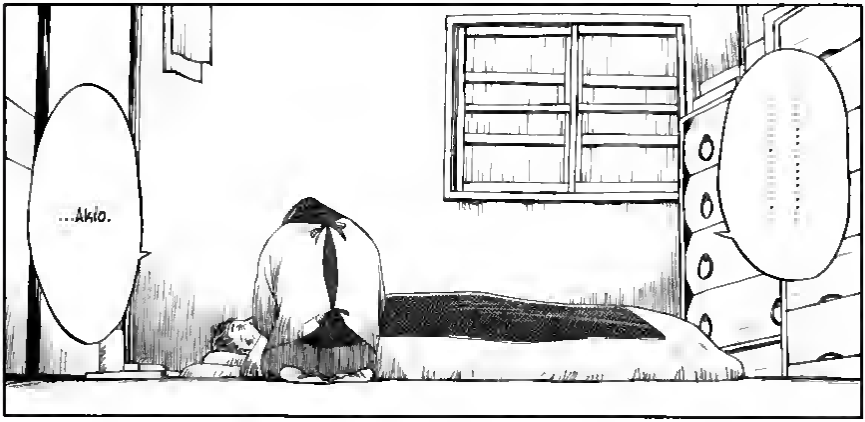
So just wait a little while for me, and try not to get too lonely.
Yes?
Hmm?
What is it?
Hmm?
Yo
Out with it, dear.

yo
shi
no

no
What is it, Akio?


What is it?
Hmm?


Honestly, you've always had trouble with that, haven't... you.
Say it a little more clearly. I can't understand what you said.


...Akio.
.....

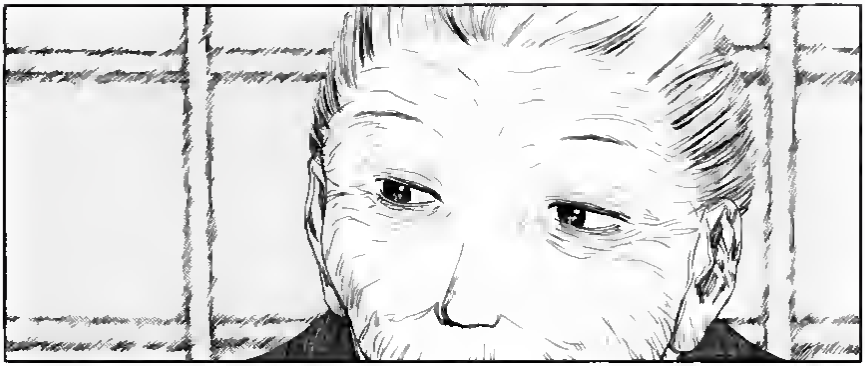
Akio.

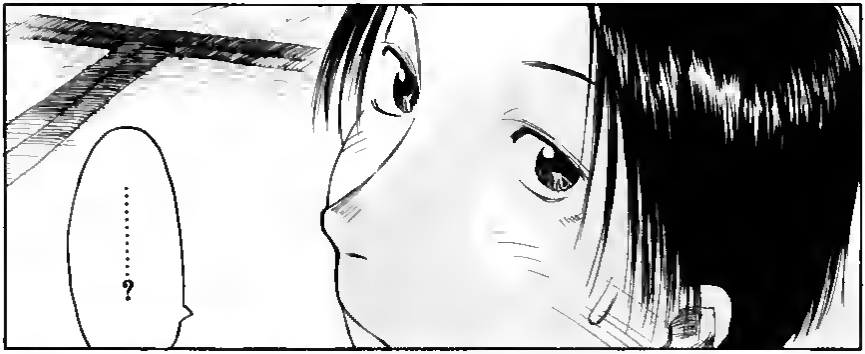
Akio.

Please don't die.

I don't
want you
to die.

You know, she was always so cheerful, wasn't she?
Yeah, but considering what's going on with Dad, I think it's understandable.
He hasn't even written his will and we might have to hold his Funeral.
Hmmm... I suppose.
THIS WILL BE A LOT OF WORK
YES BUT WE WOULD HAVE HAD TO DO IT SOME DAY
Ah, Mother how is he?
He's asleep.
Okay So he's going to hold on for a while longer, then.
Well... At least he won't be bedridden for long.
Maybe.



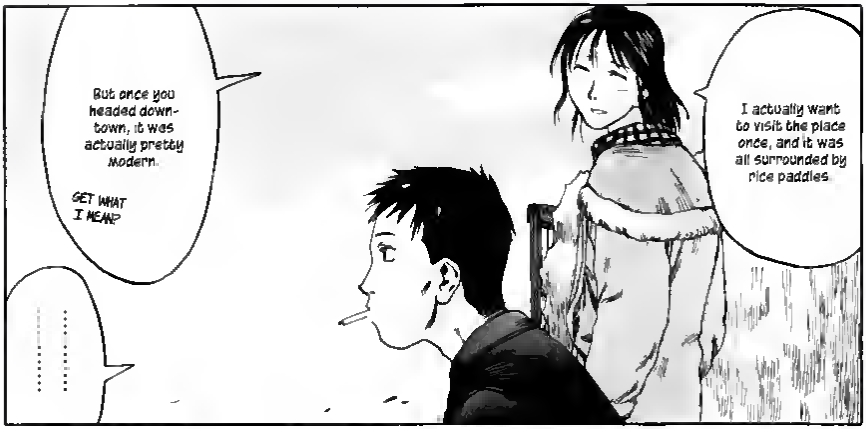


The morning of the next day, September 30th, 9:30 AM
—Is she crying?

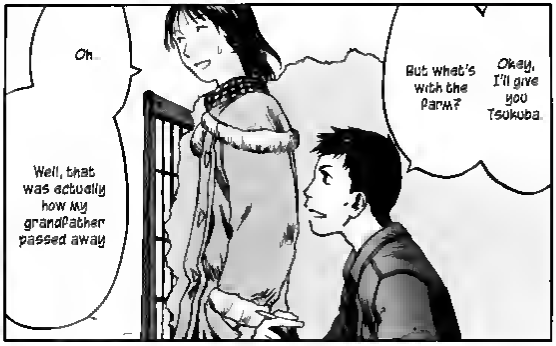
His wife, Yoshino, survives him for five more years, before also passing away at the age of 88.
Shima Akio passes away at the age of 83.

...Or something like that.

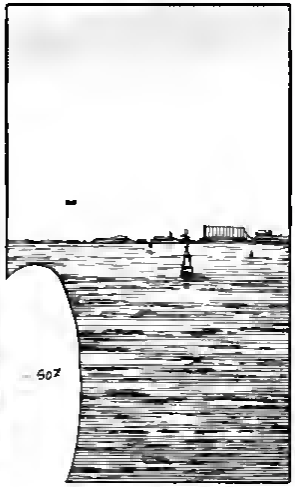
How's that sound to you?
Well...
Hmm?
Not that I've got a problem with dying first or anything, but...
But...
Why Tsukuba, out of all cities?
Oh, umm. One of my high school friends actually got into a university in Tsukuba, actually...


I actually want to visit the place once, and it was all surrounded by rice paddies.
But once you headed downtown, it was actually pretty modern.
GET WHAT I MEAN?
.....

Yeah.
Ah, so you thought that'd make it feel a bit more real, huh


Oh.
Well, that was actually how my grandfather passed away
But what's with the park?
Okay, I'll give you Tsukuba.

It doesn't feel like a proper ending if you just have us die and say "I hope it happens like this."
How's that story supposed to end?
It doesn't really have an ending.

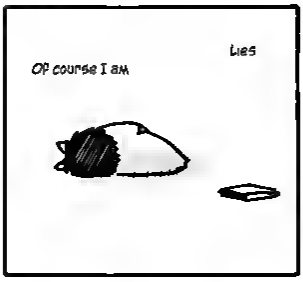

So?

I was just saying what I thought might happen if we kept going like we are now
That's all
Hmm..
Really?
Sounds like something I'd say.
Yeah I understand how you feel.
Just how you feel, but yeah

Something you want to say?
Well, I think what you're saying is, it can't be about romance all the time,
but at the same time it's not like you can really ignore it, yeah?
Something like that?
So, since you have to address it somehow either way,
you want to just give an answer to it for now and leave it at that for a bit, right?

I think we really understand each other well.
Pfft. I'm telling you there's no good in overthinking things like that.

# EXTRA MANGA EMBARRASSMENT THEATER 2

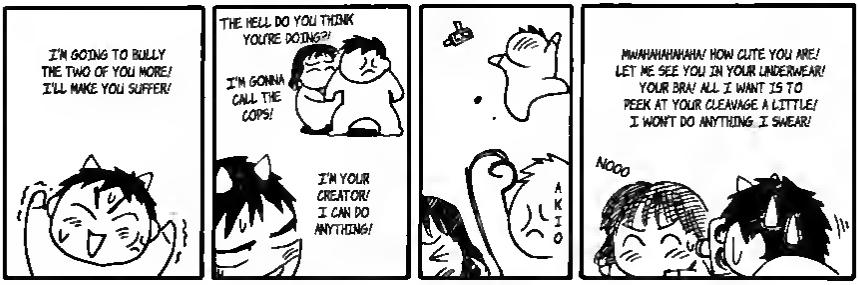


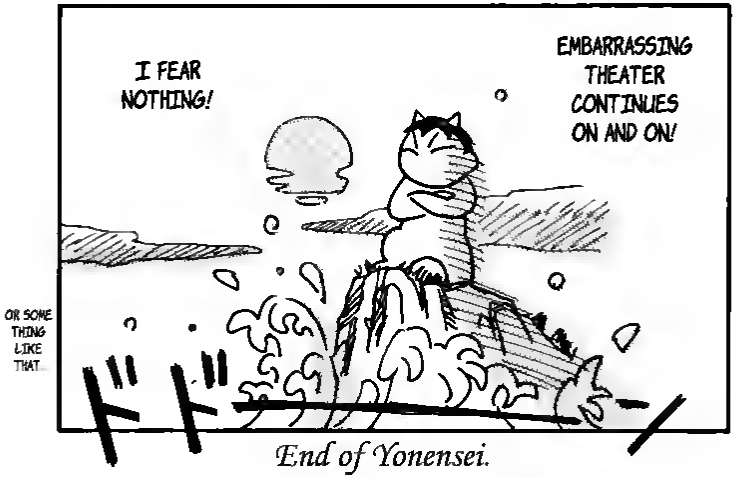
And, well I'm technically included in "everyone," so basically I'm writing what I'm doing.
I still drew it thinking, "I bet that pretty much everyone goes through something like this when it comes to relationships."

So I'm going to take this opportunity to say,
NO! I hate doing it from behind!!
SOMEONE ASKED ME AT THE AFTERNOON END OF YEAR PARTY. "MR. KIO. DO YOU LIKE DOING IT FROM BEHIND?"
Still, Akio and I are different people, so we feel and think differently,
but still
But still
because you can't see her face!
And the reason why is...
So we have to make up for that with information from our eyes and ears!
Men feel pleasure differently from women!
We have to be able to enjoy watching a woman go mad with pleasure!!
Men feel less direct pleasure than women do,
I'd do it if she asked.
But.
はあ
はあはあ
はあ

Well actually the thing is, my brother had kids a while ago! They were so cute I had to put them in here!
IDIOT
Babies are cute, right?
Oh, but actually, something great happened a while ago!
AND THIS IS WHY THERE WILL NEVER BE A "KAGEROU NIKKI 2" TO FOLLOW UP ON "KAGEROU NIKKI 1"
EVER SINCE THEN, MY BABY DETECTOR KEEPS GOING OFF IN THE STREETS.
OH, THAT BABY'S CUTE
If not for these two I'd probably never visit!
They're even cuter since they're not mine, so I don't have to actually take care of them.
Here they are. Twins, a boy and a girl
To be honest, I feel like I might have included a little too many of them.
So anyway, that's why there's babies and old people in this manga
This goes on for one and a third pages.
You know what? They're almost two years old now, and they're practically toddlers! They walk around and make funny faces and

YOSHINO
but I think that next time, I'll try and zoom in for a more narrow one.
This time I actually went with a pretty wide perspective.


I'M GOING TO BULLY THE TWO OF YOU MORE! I'LL MAKE YOU SUFFER!
THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?!
I'M GONNA CALL THE COPS!
I'M YOUR CREATOR! I CAN DO ANYTHING!
AKIO
MWAHAHAHAHAHA! HOW CUTE YOU ARE! LET ME SEE YOU IN YOUR UNDERWEAR! YOUR BRA! ALL I WANT IS TO PEEK AT YOUR CLEAVAGE A LITTLE! I WON'T DO ANYTHING, I SWEAR!
NOOO




*End of Yonensei.*

*To be Continued in Gonensei!*

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また、今後「アフタヌーンKC」にまとめてほしい作品がありましたら編集部までお知らせ下さい。

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